ENTERTAINMENT / E1

Where would the stars have sat and with whom had the Globe awards gone on

WORLD / A20

Bush to trace steps of Jesus during 1st visit to Israel, Palestine

NEWS / A16

CBCP: Deaths of Nazarene devotees challenge Church to deepen faith beyond touching holy images

BUSINESS / B1

Gov't allots P624B to pay debts; interest lower by 2.47% in '08

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Friday, January 11, 2008 | 44 | 9 sections | Vol. 23 | No. 33 | P18

Gov't helping OFW kin to stretch dollar

By Jhunnex Napallacan, Joey Gideons and David Isaac Siroy
Inquirer Visayas and Mindanao

THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING SOME-thing to help OFW families stretch their dollar remittances.

Jasmine Cordero, whose husband works in New Zealand, feels that the value of the US dollar against the peso is declining.

"Before, I could receive between P15,000 to P15,000 a month from him. Now, it's less than that," Cordero, of Tacloban City, said. Her husband, Gerry, left the country in March last year.

The peso gained nearly 14 percent against the dollar last year, making it Asia's best performing currency. The Philippine currency further strengthened against the dollar in the start of this year.

Francis Allan Angelo of Iloilo City, a son of an overseas Filipino worker (OFW), said the strong peso had not severely affected his family's income.

Angelo's mother, Esther, has been working in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for 13 years.

JUST 5 NEGROS A...

Opposition sees Charter change bid as GMA ploy

By Dona Pazzibugan and Norman Bordadora

PROMINENTSTADON AND OPPOSITION lawmakers yesterday voiced suspicion that the Arroyo administration proposed to amend the Constitution could be a pretext to allow President Macapagal-Arroyo to stay in power beyond 2010.

The lawmakers were reacting to a statement this other day by Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza that the Palace would ask Congress to convene as the Quarter to allow for the creation of a Muslim-federal region in Mindanao as a step toward ending the decades-old Muslim separatist rebellion.

It was not immediately clear what had prompted Dureza's statement in the face of opposition from not only the proposed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he supported the setting up of a federal system but warned Malacañang against using federalism as a ploy to keep Mrs. Arroyo in power.

"It is high time to push beyond the schis-

OPPOSITION A2

Bicol congressman denies owning Ferrari: How I wish

LEGAZPI CITY—ALBAY REP. AL FRANCIS BICHARA said he did not own a Ferrari.

"How I wish. It's a dream city," said Bichara, who denied owning four of the 31 luxury cars seized in Makati last month.

Bichara, who flew to Albay yesterday from Manila, clarified that he only owned seven true Jeep Cherokees, both of which were 1998 models, a Jipani and a Volvo. He said he denied owning a Lamborghini.

He said some of the cars he owned were bought second-hand.

Bichara said he purchased one Cherokee for only P300,000 and then he brought home the Jipani after his stint in Philippines ambassador to Lebanon. He acquired the Volvo in the Philippines.

BICOL A3

P1B in Jose Velarde account found intact

PNP holds 15 liable for gas blast

By Alexis Pape and Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

THE FINAL REPORT: Three months after the Glorietta 2 explosion, the PNP presents its report on Thursday. The top guns, from left, are Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, PNP Director General Avelino Razon and Chief Supt. Leocadio Tinsay of the Southern Police District and head of the Philippinepany investigation Task Force.

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL Police yesterday released its final report on the Glorietta 2 Mall explosion and recommended the filing of criminal and administrative charges against 15 persons, including officials of the Makati Superintendent Corp. (MSC) that owns the Building and the Makati Fire Department.

Presenting the report in a news conference, Chief Supt. Leocadio Tinsay of the Southern Police District said two persons—a physician, not just one, in the basement of the G2 mall in Makati City caused the death of 11 persons and injured 108 others on Oct. 19 last year.

The report recommended the PNP theory that the explosion was not caused by a bomb and was not connected to the attack in a mall of space in the G2 basement that were ignited by sparks from unknown sources in the area.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said officials of Ayala Land Inc. (ALI), which owns the G2 mall and is running the building, from MSC, were not recommended for prosecution on the PNP's assumption that the company had exercised "due care and diligence."

"The standard we used here is whether or not the corporation has not just Ayala but [also] MSC exercised due care and prudence and diligence in making their decisions ... in hiring the corporations that were involved in the maintenance and repair of the [basement]. In our opinion as of now, there were those with the care and diligence on the witness of evidence to the contrary," Puno said.

But in a statement, ALI reiterated that the conditions in the G2 basement "before the blast allegedly occurred, could not have triggered a gas explosion."

It said it had agreed not to file PNP the results of the investigation of foreign forensic experts but had consulted, "already indicated that there is explosion

PNP HOLDS A2

Victim's wife settles with Ayala for P1M in cash, P4-M house

By Julie M. Aurelio and Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

IN EXCHANGE FOR P1 MILLION in cash and a house worth P4 million, a widow has promised not to file suit against Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) for the explosion at Glorietta 2 that killed her husband and 10 others.

"Yes, we were relieved that," Marie de Jesus yesterday told the Inquirer on the phone.

She said her acceptance of the settlement offer from ALI meant that she would no longer sue the company for damages for the death of her husband, Jose Alfaro Ong-Ayuyao, saying he also go home neighborhood, while we go farming Aurora sa Luzon, other relatives.

But De Jesus was quick to point out that ALI was not remiss in attending to her needs after her husband was killed.

Not single centavo belongs to me—Erap

By TJ Burgonio and Jacaylyn R. Uy

MAKING HEADWAY IN its nearly two-month-long search, the Sandiganbayan has found P1.1 billion worth of assets in the Jose Velarde bank account of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

Eduardo Ucol, the antigraft court's chief sheriff, confirmed that the shares of stock and receivables in Estrada's account at Equitable-PCIBank, now Banco de Oro-EPCI Inc., were seized.

"The office is now in the process of consultation with Banco de Oro officials regarding the means of action in the delivery or selling at public auction of the shares of stocks of the [Mla. Trust Account] ... to enable to satisfy the P189,700,000 as stated in the writ of execution in the Jose 'Velarde' account," Ucol said in his report yesterday to the court's Special Division.

The Hold Departure Management Assistant is part of the four Velarde accounts.

A source in the court said the sheriff would meet with bank officials until week in determine if the assets "could be turned liquid."

Estrada distanced himself from the account.

"That's a spin," he said in a call to the Inquirer to dispute reports he owned the account. "But a single cent belongs to me. There he forgets the Jose Velarde account."

After Estrada was convicted of plunder in September last year, the Sandiganbayan sheriff was ordered to seize in favor of the government P480,766 million in the Jose Velarde account and P845,191 million in Erap.

P 1 BILLION A2

Revillame seeks advice: How can I keep P30-M sports car?

By Jerome Aning and Jolene R. Balonkita
Inquirer Visayas

POPULAR TELEVISION SHOW HOST Willie Revillame has asked the President and Smuggling Group (PSG) for advice on how to handle an illegally acquired 2006 model Ferrari sports car.

"He called up one of our men and asked what he should do," Undersecretary Antonio Villar Jr., who heads the PSG, told reporters yesterday.

Revillame also made a similar inquiry to the Philippine Motorcycle Police Traffic Man-

REVILLAME A2

ADVERTISING MID luxury is a 2006 Ferrari F430 Spider...price: $360,000 to $385,000; passenger capacity: 2 including driver; transmission: 6-speed manual; 4.3-liter gas 4-8 cam tech

US analysts still trying to figure out Clinton win

WASHINGTON—WHILE AN ELEVEN-hour tide of sympathetic tearjerkers, people is inclined to say they were not backing black candidate, or problems with the polls there's others?

Pollsters and other analysts floated all kinds of theories on Wednesday, after former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton

US ANALYSTS A2

Car registration jumped from 2 in '06 to 3,906 in '07

By Jolene R. Balonkita
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—FAMED P 42-ON TV host Willie Revillame.

Media reports that Revillame got a "hot" Ferrari sports car from Toledo City have put a spotlight on the plunging number increase in the registration of motor vehicles for in the local branch of

CAR REGISTRATION A2

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

EZ2 SIX DIGIT

14 18 | 1 4 5 0 6 7

SUERTRES

7 1 6 | 9 5 7

SUPERLOTTO 6/49

7 28 30 31 35 40

P83,221,761.60

Gov't eyes higher 'sin' taxes

Finance dep't says it's not keen on text tax

By Michelle V. Rarra

THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT will support measures seeking to increase the taxes on alcohol and cigarettes, but is not keen on a proposal to tax text messaging, at least not this year.

Teresa Heblora, director for fiscal policy and planning at the Department of Finance, said the department was reviewing HB 9334, which details how the excise tax on cigarettes and alcohol should be raised.

She said the Department of Finance agreed that cigarettes and alcohol are not being sufficiently taxed.

"The tax on cigarettes and alcohol, because it is specific, gets eroded by inflation. Recovery of tax collection still needs to improve because it does not stay with the growth of the economy yet," Heblora told reporters.

RA 9334, also known as the Sin Tax Law of 2005, mandates that the excise tax on cigarettes and alcohol be increased every five years until 2011.

But even with the mandated increase in the tax rates, the government still feels it is not collecting enough from cigarettes and alcohol, considered sins. The DOF said this was partly because the increase in the tax rates was not commensurate with the increases in prices of the so-called sin products.

The Sin Tax law is also promoted to be liberal because the "old" cigarette brands, or those that were introduced into the market in 1997 and earlier, are being taxed based on their 1997 prices and not current prices.

Latest government data show that the Bureau of Internal Revenue collected P29.03 billion worth of excise taxes on cigarettes and alcoholic beverages from January to September 2007, resulting a P692.5 million, or 2 percent, drop from the P30.5.2 billion recorded in the same period the previous year.

The World Health Organization has also said that the Philippines does not tax the so-called sin products enough and urged governments to further increase the tax to discourage excessive consumption of the products.

WHO said that the cigarette tax in Singapore was equivalent to $1.92.56 per 1,000 sticks, while that in Poland is at $39.5. In Malaysia, cigarettes are taxed $23.27 per 1,000 sticks. But in the Philippines, it said, the excise tax on cigarettes ranges from only $42.41 to $49.39 per 1,000 sticks.

As for the proposed tax on text messaging, the DOF said the agency has not received the proposed tax measure in its legislative agenda for 2008. But it noted that such a measure would significantly boost revenue collection.

According to estimates by the National Tax Research Center (NTRC), the government could generate as much as P42.2 billion in additional revenue each year if it were to slap a 50-centavo tax on every text message sent.

The proposal to tax text messaging is being resisted amid efforts of the government to raise more revenues and balance the budget this year. The proposal was first suggested in 2004 when the fiscal situation was in far worse shape, but it was met pursued because of strong opposition from consumers groups.

Texting now a sin?

ARE STRONG HINTS THAT government is considering a tax on text messaging to make up for the revenues it will lose if oil excises are abolished, the telecommunications companies should be concerned their disappointed and claimed that texting was already being unfairly taxed.

"There is already a tax, the 12 percent VAT, that covers the additional price of a regular text message, which is P1," said Smart Communications spokesperson Jun Ramos Jabaria.

"We pay a lot of taxes already. There is the franchise tax, corporate tax, revenue contribution tax and many others," said Globe Telecom spokesperson Issac Campos.

Any additional tax would bring users up, which would make it harder to deliver quality service at affordable prices. Consider the leaps in, restaurants to regularly upgrade and expand individual networks," said Jun Collelar legal chief William Fuentes.

The others are now asking if the new tax is a "sin tax," which would mean that text messaging has been classified as either a luxury or a vice, like cigarettes smoking.

Alberto said Smart considers texting as a basic service, especially for lower-income users to whom cell-bill rate would be expensive.

About 400 million to 600 million text messages are sent everyday. *Rya Olchondra with Norman Bordadora*

Solons see Naia3 damage

CONGRESSMEN YESTERDAY SAW FOR themselves the delays that have kept the new terminal of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport from being opened.

Twenty members of the oversight committee of the House of Representatives, two of them civil engineers, inspected Naia3 Terminal 3 to assess the progress of the repair work on the facility that was built in 2002 but has yet to see its first passengers.

"We have now verified beyond the reasonable doubt that the [civil engineers] Representative Faustino Michi and Sandy Gonzalez is that's hooked to the problem, they use the cracks and a solar crack on and leaning beams. We saw the floor where parts bulged, the effect of a recent earthquake," said committee chair Rep. Claudio Teehankee.

The Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) has blamed the structural defects for the delay in opening the terminal, currently the subject of legal wrangling in both Philippine and international courts.

The lawmakers and Miaa officials met for the airport's office this morning. The results are learned from the meeting and the inspection tour. *Sarwa Quinsaat*

WHAT'S INSIDE

2 ADMIN stalwarts back national ID system /A4

Court gives go-ahead for new civil eng'g test

By Leila B. Salaverria

CIVIL ENGINEERING GRADUATES WHO TOOK the licensure exam last year must retake the test on Jan. 22 as ordered by the Professional Regulation Commission, the Court of Appeals has ruled.

In declaring the plan of 12 graduates for a temporary restraining order (TRO) on the results of the exam as void ab initio, the court said the more than 6,000 examinees would suffer an irreparable harm.

In a resolution released yesterday, the appellate court's 12th Division through Associate Justice Edgardo Carpio Morales said that since the exams were given in November last year, it would be to the benefit of the graduates to retake the test while the subjects were still fresh in their minds.

"[And], if the petitions [for a TRO] is later found to be meritorious and is granted, the second exam will simply be nullified," the court said.

"In short, petitioners will suffer no greater harm or irreparable injury by the re-taking of the second examination," it said.

The appellate court directed the PRC to file its comment to the graduates' petition within 10 days.

The graduates' lawyer, Jobert Pahilga, said he would file a motion for reconsideration in the appellate court today.

The PRC invalidated the results of the civil engineering board exams in Hydraulics and Geotechnical Engineering after it found what it described as "statistically improbable" results because of the unusually high grades in the examinees.

It found that 461 of the 4,720 examinees had gotten perfect scores, while 627 scored higher than 99 percent.

The PRC also nullified the results of the Structural Engineering and Construction test after two examinees were caught with mobile phones, one of which contained the answers to 20 mathematics, 21 of them correct.

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Tesda chief in graft case no sacred cow–Palace

By Michael Lim Ubac

DIRECTOR GENERAL SUJATNO Sujaco of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is "no sacred cow" despite his presumed slayalan in President Macapagal-Arroyo, Malacañang said yesterday.

In an interview, Cerge Remonde, head of the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) vowed to let justice take its course in the corruption charge leveled against Sujaco.

A former congressman and loyal Arroyo ally, Sujaco stands the PAGC case "dismissed for lack of merit since no similar injury has been caused to the government."

"We will see to it that justice will be done and due process observed," said Remonde, after appointee Sen. Benigno Aquino III said that the Sujaco case was an acid test for the Arroyo administration's campaign against corruption.

Aquino has said that a reversal of the PAGC findings would deal a big blow to the fight against corruption because the public would see the antigraft body as useless against Mr. Arroyo's allies.

Remonde thinks the Palace created three-member Commission of Jhons, which evaluates the findings and recommendations of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC).

The other members are Budget and Management Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. and National Economic Development Authority Director General Augusto Santos.

Sujaco is the first Cabinet member to be charged with graft since he assumed his post in 2004.

Aquino questioned Malacañang's procedures governing in-house inquiries on corruptions, saying he saw no point why the PAGC recommendations should go to the Malacañang Committee of Jhons instead of straight to the Ombudsman.

But Remonde said while PAGC had the mandate to investigate all ranking presidential appointees, "the committee evaluates the findings" in view involving Cabinet-rank officials.

"All PAGC recommendations are submitted to Malacañang," he said, adding that the Office of the President, through Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, handles graft cases involving presidential appointees who are not Cabinet members.

Remonde said his office received PAGC's recommendation last week.

"We will evaluate the case. It's been evaluated by the secretaries of the committee but the committee will evaluate the case during its regular meeting on Tuesday," he said.

"That will be the main topic," said Remonde, when asked if other graft cases involving Cabinet officials would be discussed.

SUJACO

KUMON

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2 admin stalwarts back national ID system

By Cynthia D. Balana and Leila B. Salaverria

TWO STALWARTS OF THE Administration yesterday backed a unified national identification system adjusted to current conditions.

Vice President Noli de Castro urged Congress to review the proposal carefully to assuage the fears of some sectors that a national ID would infringe on the citizens' right to privacy and violate their human rights.

"The national ID system should first be debated in Congress to hear all sides of the issue," De Castro said in a press conference.

"I believe that this way we could make it more efficient and achieve its true aim," he said in the statement translated from Filipino.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez concurred, saying a national ID would bring a slew of benefits to the people and any risks associated with it could be controlled.

"Personally, I agree with the concept for the ID system. I think the only objection is the possibility of abuse... but what rule or law is not susceptible [to abuse]?" Gonzalez told reporters in accompanying remarks at his office.

He also said it would be a good idea to debate the proposal in Congress so that its merits and shortcomings could be aired and the people would be better informed.

The military recently revived the call for a national ID system, but Malacañang and only Congress had the power to approve it.

Gonzalez said having a national ID system would help the military in its campaign against communist insurgents and terrorists.

SAN BEDA COLLEGE ALABANG
Ministry for Liturgical Affairs, Manila

LITURGY CONFERENCE 2008

Topic: **SACRAMENTALS AND BLESSINGS**
Dates: April 8 - 10, 2008
Venue: San Carlos Major Seminary Auditorium, Makati City
Conference Fee: Php 1,200

April 8 (Tuesday)

8:00 A.M. Registration
8:45 Morning Prayer
Welcome Address: Gaudencio Cardinal B. Rosales, D.D.
Theology of Sacramentals and Blessings: Fr. Anicet J. Chiampong, SSS
10:00 Break
10:30 Historical Highlights: Sr. Josefina Manabat
11:30 Lunch Break
1:30 P.M. Music for Sacramentals and Blessings: Fr. Nilo Mangunsad
3:00 Blessing of Persons: Ms. Gina Cejudo
4:00 End of Session

April 9 (Wednesday)

8:45 A.M. Morning Prayer
9:00 Rite of Exorcism: Fr. Virgilio Hernandez
10:30 Blessing of Homes, Buildings, and Vehicles: Fr. Angelo Lugar, OSB
1:30 P.M. Blessing of Religious Objects: Fr. Gerard Chan
3:00 Blessing of Animals and Instruments of Work: Mr. Carlos Evangelista

April 10 (Thursday)

8:15 A.M. Morning Prayer
8:30 Ministers of Sacramentals and Blessings: Fr. Raul Pura, CM
9:30 Pastoral-Liturgical Questions: Fr. Jose Fortunato Dacanay, CSsR
11:00 Eucharistic Celebration: Gaudencio Cardinal B. Rosales, D.D.

REMINDER:
Christian Formation Lecture No. 4: "[illegible]"
January 10 (Wednesday), 7:30 P.M. San Beda College Alabang Chapel
January 11 (Thursday), 7:00 P.M. San Carlos Major Seminary Auditorium
Speakers: Bishop Teodoro Bacani, D.D. and Fr. Virgilio Hernandez

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BIGAS	PRESYO/KG
Rice Premium	P27-38
Rice Fancy	P30-45
Banguas	P70-98
Tilapia	P66-98
Galunggong	P90-120
Kamatis	P25-55
Pechay	P18-48
Sitaw	P40-68
Talong	P30-58

Presyo sa pulengon sa Metro Manila

dti

KETAN-TIP: Lutuing matindi ang lame, kulo at mainit para maguhulungan ang sustansyang taglay nito.

HOTLINE: 0920-6438814

Correction

In the Jan. 9 issue, Rina Jimenez-David's Arlequin column on Page A13, of the Opinion section—"The making of a yuletide"—misnamed the city where the Mendiolas's ancestral homecoming would be held. The homecoming is set on Jan. 31, which falls on a Saturday—not Friday.

+ + +

Readers may send their requests for the publication of [illegible] errors in writing to the Public Affairs Office, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Tordesillas St., Salcedo Vill., Makati City, fax this to 896-6160, e-mail us at [illegible] or [illegible]. Complaints about lack of delivery or a subscription may be sent to [illegible] or [illegible]. Subscription [illegible] should be addressed to [illegible]. Subscription rates are [illegible] per month, [illegible] per quarter and [illegible] per year. Back issues are available at the Inquirer Circulation Department at [illegible] per copy.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The Public is hereby advised that the Philippine Institute of Architects, during its Special Board Meeting of November 17, 2007, has WITHDRAWN the Charter Grants from the following seven (7) Institute Sections, namely: DAVAO, CAGAYAN DE ORO, BUTUAN, ILOILO, LA UNION, TARLAC, and CAVITE for violating the basic provisions of its charter as Institute Sections and of PIA membership in accordance with the By-Laws of the Philippine Institute of Architects.

The Public is hereby warned that any transactions entered into with any of the above-mentioned Sections, for, and in behalf of, the Philippine Institute of Architects, shall not be honored by the Institute and bind it in whatever capacity.

For the Public's proper guidance.

AGUIRRE ARAÑON PAMPILO PARAS PINEDA & AGUSTIN LAW OFFICES
Suite 2304, East Tower, Philippine Stock Exchange Center Building, Exchange Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City, Philippines

For: **NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
Philippine Institute of Architects

PHILIPPINE INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
NATIONAL BOARD

The Philippine Institute of Architects, the oldest architectural organization in Asia, shall be celebrating its 75th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary on January 10, 2008, featuring landmark activities culminating on the 75th National Convention to be held from February 27 to March 1, 2008. Since its launching last October, the 75th Convention Organizing Committee, chaired by Architect JOSE A. RIVAS, FIA, and ably complemented by Architects ERNESTO A. D. NASOL, FPIA as Convention Director and ROGELIO G. VILLAROSA, FPIA as Chairman of Ways and Means, have been busy coordinating all the Pre-Convention Conferences among the participating host Institute Sections, as well as the Convention Proper to be hosted by Manila Section.

With its synthesis "PARADIGM", on the occasion of its Diamond Jubilee Anniversary, the National Board of Directors as headed by MANUEL II. ICASAS, FPIA, National President, after recent internal developments within the organization, decided to focus more on redefinitions of professional practice for membership growth and development, and the key role the Institute shall play towards making that vision for the next quarter century, at least.

Industry Partners and Friends of the Institute, this time, shall play a more direct participative role. By being part of the discussions, it is envisioned that more understanding of each other's roles will be fostered and, thus, translate to more cooperative, complimentary and co-beneficial interaction among all the industry partners. Everyone is enjoined to participate and extend support, as well, to PIA's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. For more details, please contact our National Secretariat at tel. nos. 474-8367 or 634-1762, or email us at piaarchitects@yahoo.com.

Again, a note of caution: The Institute, through its Board of Directors, shall not honor any transaction by any party in the name of the Institute other than those transacted by its authorized representatives, the 75th Convention Committee and its Executive Officers only.

US analysts still ...

From page A1

salvaged her candidacy with a startling 39 percent to 36 percent victory over her Democratic rival, Barack Obama, in the New Hampshire primary.

Muddling the hand-wringing, most of these same polling organizations—using the same techniques—forecast Jon. John McCain's 5-percentage-point win in the Republican race with admirable accuracy.

"I don't think anybody knows for sure the psyches of this point," said Mark Mellman, a Democratic pollster.

It was not just the pollsters. Journalists covering the candidates on their final full day of campaigning described larger, more energized crowds attending Obama's events—than Clinton's.

And hours the Clinton camp came to of campaign shake-ups, as well as a main-eyed candidate vowing to struggle on regardless—an appearance some analysts said helped humanize her and win supporters.

Women powered victory

Women powered Clinton to victory a surprise, because Obama had edged her among women in the Iowa caucuses five days earlier.

Several women said they chose to vote for Clinton at the last moment because she had shown a human side of herself that they had never seen.

"At first, I thought it was bad that she cried, but then I thought she is a woman, give her a chance," said Irene Pavlos, a voter and grandmother.

Based on interviews with a dozen New Hampshire voters and revelations from Clinton advisers, it is clear that Clinton's unshakable belief until the last hour in Obama as Iowa corrected because of several key moments—some planned, some not.

She also won support by sharpening her message of experience into concrete terms.

She showed grit

Among the pivots was her decision to take questions after ignition from voters at her New Hampshire events, a break from her past appearances. Several female voters interviewed this week said it showed grit.

Pressure accounted for an unexpectedly large 37 percent of the turnout in New Hampshire, and Clinton gained 40 percent of their votes, to 34 percent for Obama.

The same survey also suggested that economic worries, apparently growing suddenly in recent days, worked to Clinton's advantage.

Some think changes in voters' attitudes occurred on Monday and Primary Day itself—when most survey organizations had stopped polling. And many of their decisions date from come in the final hours, despite what they told exit pollsters.

Missing the end game

"Most polls stopped interviewing halfway through ... and may have missed the end game," said Tarren Bragman, the Associated Press director of surveys.

Stanford University political scientist Jon A. Krosnick said Clinton may have gotten the last outrage because names on ballots across New Hampshire were listed alphabetically, with hers near the top. He said such placement could mean a 3-percentage-point advantage was those listed toward the bottom, like Obama.

The unpredictable fight for the White House turns national on Saturday as an candidates battled success in the United States.

Nevada: Next battleground

The immediate focus of both the Clinton and Obama campaigns was the Nevada caucuses on Jan. 19, which was shaping up as the latest major test of the strength of both these candidates.

Adding to the most wide-open presidential campaigns in half-century, associates of New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg disclosed he had authorized polling and voter analysis in all 50 states as a possible precursor to an independent candidacy by the billionaire.

Clinton stayed off the campaign trail as she and her aides debated how to allocate her time and money through the Feb. 5 "Super Tuesday," when 22 states will vote.

Unions for Obama

Despite his defeat, Obama pocketed the support of two major Nevada labor unions in advance of that state's Jan. 19 caucuses and predicted a win in the South Carolina primary a week later.

McCain, on the other hand, entered into the next Republican battleground of Michigan with fresh momentum from his New Hampshire win, hoping to score a knockout punch on Tuesday against rival Mitt Romney, the former Massachusetts governor.

The state by state race to pick candidates for the November election shifted from the mismatch, face-to-face politics of Iowa and New Hampshire to a wider national campaign driven by big-money television ads and cross-country plane trips.

Increasingly, really cash is becoming a factor in both races.

Both Obama and Clinton exported big fund-raising numbers in the last three months of 2007, with Clinton bringing in $24 million for the nominating race and Obama $22.4 million. Obama raised $8 million in the first eight days of 2008.

Tony McAuliffe, Clinton's national campaign chair, said her New Hampshire win spurred a rush of more than $1 million in donations in one day. With reports from the New York Times News Service, Reuters and AFP

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What Drives You CALTEX

₱1B in Jose Velarde account found intact

From page A1

slot Rep. Muslim Youth From Global.

Inciting payoffs

The money-supposedly pay-offs from the illegal numbers game "jueteng," said sources close to the ruling of Bulacan Governor Jonvic Remulla and Bulacan Board Member Jose Manalo, Quezon City.

Records was purchased by President Macapagal-Arroyo in October, but this did not exempt him from the bookmaker proceedings, the court said.

In response to a request from Uriarte, Gerardo Bautista, head of Banco de Oro's legal advisory and research department, confirmed on Dec. 14, 2007, that the money in BA Trust Account No. 1021-0000-1 were intact, quoting its Trust Department.

Watchlist and Wilde shares

Bautista said the assets held in trust in the bank as of Oct. 2, 2006, were a promissory note and a time deposit account worth P500 million, 450 million shares in Watchlist Philippines (now valued at P427.5 million at P0.95/share), 100 million shares in Wilde Industries (now valued at P64 million at P0.28/share), and a common trust fund investment amounting to P6.750 million.

Uriarte and Wilde are controlled by Gerardo Bautista, William Gatchalian.

Gatchalian's name cropped up in Bautista's impeachment trial in late 2006 and then in the hearings on the plunder case against his friend that was alleged to have received a P500 million loan from Estrada through the Jose Velarde account.

'Not mine'

The shares belonged to Gatchalian, Estrada insisted.

"Yes, I have shares in the account. And I'm aware that I don't have a single cent from the account. I guaranteed that account [BA Trust Account] to secure investors of the Jose Velarde account that they will be paid by William Gatchalian," Estrada said.

"There's nothing now about the account. It was just transferred to Banco de Oro," he said. "They ran all get it. It's not mine."

He said Gatchalian put up first-class shares as collateral when the businessman borrowed money from the account.

Estrada again linked Jinkee Dichaves, a businessman who was also an investor in the plunder case, to the controversial account.

Chris Ting, vice president of Wilcon Group, said the loans the company obtained from Equitable PCI Bank was legally discussed.

The company borrowed P500 million from the Jose Velarde account "and it's not belonged to Jinkee, with Wilde's shares of stocks as collateral.

"But the loan has been settled previously with Mr. Dichaves," she said, adding that the company has yet to claim the collateral from the bank.

Collateral

"We still have to go to the bank and ask it about the requirement to the collateral can be released," the said in a statement.

Uriarte met Bautista on Dec. 4 last year to check if the shares in the account were still intact.

The deputy commissioner of the Bureau of Internal Revenue ordered in January 2001 the freezing of Equitable PCIBank to prove under the custody any goods, chattels, or personal property, among others, of Estrada and his wife, Senator Jinkee Laine Ejercito, to stop them from disposing of their assets.

Gov't helping OFW kin to stretch dollar

From page A1

"Before the dollar went down to ₱40, we received a monthly allowance of ₱25,000 to ₱30,000. Now, we receive only around ₱20,000 to ₱22,000," he said.

He said the strengthening of the peso came at a bad time because the family was still paying debts incurred when his father got sick.

"Before, we used to buy two cans of corned beef budget for groceries amounting ₱6,000 to ₱7,000 per month. Now, we have a monthly budget of ₱4,000 to ₱5,000 per month," he said.

Semi-skilled workers

Semi-skilled OFWs, or those earning between ₱300 and ₱999 a month, are the ones experiencing tougher times, a Hikdecongtag deputy spokesperson said.

Evangeline Pilapil, director of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), and Estrella Vizmin, said several OFWs had visited her office to express disappointment over the strengthening.

"They even told us that they felt like not going abroad again because of the weak peso. But after days again, they realized that they have to leave the country and work outside for the sake of their families," Vizmin said.

Government assistance

Help in the form of training, loans and financial literacy and scholarship programs is being extended by government agencies like Owwa to OFW families.

As early as last year, Pandesal Forum Foundation Inc. started the Department of Labor and Employment (Dole) and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to help OFWs, said Anthony Golez, deputy presidential spokesperson.

Belit has focused its efforts on providing the other semiskilled OFWs come from. These include Ilocos, Leyte, North Cotabato, Zamboanga, Bukidnon, Capiz, Maguindanao, South Cotabato, Agusan, Davao, Isabela and Pangasinan.

Save and invest

"The families of the semiskilled workers are provided with livelihood assistance, skills for employment, scholarship programs, communication, values formation and financial literacy, among other things in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry and (Department of Agriculture)," Golez said in Iloilo City.

He said the BSP had also come up with the Financial Literacy Program (FLC) for OFWs and their beneficiaries.

Under the FLC, OFWs and their beneficiaries are being urged to save and invest in financial products. There are also alternative ways to invest money, such as business ventures," Golez said.

The BSP also helps OFWs become familiar with consumer laws and BSP measures relating to customer protection.

Running a business

Owwa has been conducting seminars and training for OFWs and their families to teach them how to run a business, said Jesus Mendiola, regional director in charge of Owwa in 6.

Mendiola said, however, his office does groups or entities to put up retail businesses, such as convenience and grocery store, Mendiola said.

Start-up capital

Owwa extends to family circles ₱50,000 as start-up capital for a grocery business.

Reserves Vizmin has 16 convenience stores for 612 OFW families and 91 circles with 1,737 members. As members. A total of 2,349 OFW families are engaged in the retail trade in the region, Mendiola said.

Lending facility

In Central Visayas, Owwa offers subsidiary facility for OFWs and their families, said Grace Cebu information officer Maria Vendric Reyes.

Days said the lending facility, offered through Owwa's Livelihood Development Program, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to help OFWs, said Anthony Golez, deputy presidential spokesperson.

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**Loading

Senate to hold hearings on VAT on oil

DOJETTE SIOLA-ralong's strong ob-jection, the Senate will conduct public hearings on the proposal to suspend the 12-percent value added tax on oil products to ease the impact of skyrocket-ing oil prices.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, chair of the Senate ways and means committee, said he plans to start hearings a week before Congress re-sumes session on Jan. 28.

Congress is currently on holiday break and is supposed to resume session on Jan. 21, but the House of Representatives reportedly asked to delay the re-opening to finish their renovation.

The hearings aim to amend the legislated Value Added Tax (E-VAT) Law or temporarily lift the VAT on oil products to ease the impact of skyrocketing oil prices.

The proposal, which has been vig-orously pushed by Sen. Manuel Roxas II, has gained support in the Senate across party lines.

Administration Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri said he filed such to counteract the proposal ahead of Roxas, and that he had no doubts on the measure's validity.

PNP ...

From page A1

were present at the blast site.

MAGAT Hilario Arjonio Bitoy expressed hope that the PNP findings would "hurdle public skepticism and the cynicism of the courts."

"The police need to convince a highly skeptical public and the courts that their findings are credible," Bitoy said.

To be charged

According to the PNP, the following are to be charged today in the Department of Justice with reckless imprudence or gross negligence resulting in multiple homicide, physical injuries and damage to property:

Candelario Viñalonzo, project engineer of MSC-G2; Marcelo Borromeo, building engineer of MSC-G2; Jewell Velez, building administrator of MSC-G2; Arnel Gonzales, building manager of MSC-G2; Clifford Arnedo, operations manager of Mandaue Industrial Sales and Services Inc., Joselito Bautista Jr., Mandaue supervisor, and Charlie Sepcion Jr., Jonathan Evans and Jesse Estrada, Mandaue maintenance personnel.

Reckless imprudence is punishable by a prison term of from six months to four years.

To be charged with violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act as well as gross neglect of duty are SPO4 Anthony Rory, SPO2 Secundo Bulsao and Fire Senior Insp. Reynaldo Enot, all of the Mabolo City Fire Station.

Tiyanak said the Bureau of Fire Protection and The Department of the Interior and Local Government will file a separate case for violation of the Fire Code of the Philippines against engineer Ricardo Cruz of Metallitas Enterprises and Miguel Briones, a barangay of the company.

Also facing an administrative charge of simple neglect of duty is Fire Chief Insp. Jose Bañiwag, Jr.'s marshal of Makati.

Bañiwag told the business that he would personally investigate the prompt fusion once the charge had been verified.

"That is normal in public service. The administrative charge does not automatically mean involvement in negligence," Bañiwag said via the phone.

He said he said he sees strict durability for hazard procedures in supporting buildings and electrons.

According to Tiyanak, Mandaue was forced to isolate the electrical, mechanical and other systems of the mall). Firemen Electrical and Mechanical Corp. to repair the pumps in the basement, and Metrolite Enterprises to install an exhaust and ventilation system in the mall.

'Reputable' firms

Pano said the companies called in to repair the G2 basement were "reputable companies" with experience in maintenance and repair of a building's various systems.

"Therefore, you can't blame individuals who will select firms to do the work if in fact they are qualified. If, in the course of their actual implementation of their project, they are remiss in some aspects, you cannot attribute that to the officials [of ALI], and therefore you cannot find basis for probable cases against those officials," he said.

Ayala name in initial report

Tiyanak said he had no knowledge of reports alleging that the Ayala name was included in an initial draft of the PNP report.

"I don't know anything about that. Our job was to establish the direct participation of each and every individual charged. So far, there is no evidence to show the direct participation [of Ayala or any ALI officer]," he told the business.

Pano said he had instructed the Multi-Agency Investigation Task Force (MAIT) to include "everyone" in the investigation, including all officers of all corporations involved.

"For after parsing the universe of individuals there, we put a standard. It must constitute probable cause... This was part of the overall design of the investigation, to leave no one in the creative ... but there are certain conduct from the line that [one] cannot ... shows that due care and diligence were devoted by these officials," he said.

'Insignificant' RDX

In a 41-page report submitted to Pano, the MAITF led by Tiyanak affirmed its earlier finding that the ignition of toxic gases, and not a bomb, was the cause of the explosion.

"The generation and accumulation of gas because possible due to the negligence of personnel tasked to maintain the facilities in the basement," Tiyanak said.

He reiterated the MAITF's previous assertion that no bomb parts or casings were found at the scene, and that there were no "burning effect" and "blackening" in the area.

Tiyanak also said the recovered RDX—a compound found in explosives, particularly the C4 used by the military, and in construction and other consumer items—at the site were too "insignificant" to matter.

Pano quoted investigators as saying that the presence of RDX does not immediately mean a bomb was used.

"Even if you have two drums of TRH there, because all the other aspects related to a bombing were absent, there would not have been a bombing in any case. So it was irrelevant whether RDX was there or not, after all the physical evidence gathered," Pano said. With a report from Edu M. Astralis

Ayala: Our evidence ignored

AYALA LAND INC. SAID IT PEORED WITH "deep concern" the PNP's finding of a gas explosion resulting from negligence.

"Our own assessment shows that all...pence had cars was exercised in the maintenance of the basement where the explosion appears to have occurred," it said.

"Moreover, we believe that conditions in the basement could not have resulted in the buildup of methane and diesel vapor required for such a powerful blast."

ALI also said the testers of RDX found by its foreign forensic consultants at the blast site should be "significant."

It said it had hired the Malaysia-based Forensic Institute to investigate the site and the Texas-based Armstrong Forensics Laboratory to test the results of swab samples found at the site in November with the PNP's consent.

"The lab results, which yielded traces of RDX, was shared with the PNP as new evidence last month," it said, adding:

"Based on the experience of the consultants we have hired, they are not familiar with any other possible explanation for how such explosive chemicals should have come to the site, except ... from a bomb."

ALI said it was "disappointed" that three of its employees—engineers Evangelio, Velasco and Bonzales—had been named respondents in the criminal charges in Br.156 Ot. the PNP.

"We believe they are innocent. We believe that negligence was not the contributory factor in the explosion, we believe the facilities were maintained with due care and diligence," said ALI spokesperson Alfonso Reyes.

"We have evidence to support our assertion, and we will do everything we can to find the best possible defense for our employees who [will be] charged," he said.

ALI also expressed disappointment that the evidence it had "shared" seemed to have been ignored.

"While we acknowledge the authority of the PNP and the multi-agency task force as the official investigating body, we are disappointed that the evidence we have shared appears not to have been considered," it said.

ALI said it was awaiting the turnover of the blast site, "so we can complete our own assessment of what happened on Oct. 19."

OCT. 19, 2007. EXPLOSION TIES THROUGH three floors of Glorietta 2 (G2) mall, killing 11 people and wounding 100.

Police suspect an exploding cooking gas cylinder was a culprit. Later, police sources say traces of plastic explosive were found on the site, and that the bomb was apparently left near a cell phone repair shop.

Investigators say there were two explosions—one at the delivery area of Lab Save restaurant on the left side of the G2 entrance, and seconds later, a smaller one in the right side of the entrance.

Police declare highest state of alert in Metro Manila.

Oct. 20. Military chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon says the explosion was a "terrorist act."

The national government and the city government of Makati offer a reward totaling P1 million for information leading to the arrest of the perpetrators.

Chief Insp. Gerry Bumagat says at a Station 6 security Council briefing in Camp Crame that most of RDX—the main ingredient of the C4 military explosive—were found at the site.

TIMELINE

Victim's wife settles with Ayala for P1M in cash, P4-M house

From page A1

"Hindi naman po sila nagkulang," she said. "Hindi sila kasi pinabayaan."

She said she signed the waiver brought to her by the company's representative "sumunod na rin sa kanila."

"Tiwala sila sa kanila. I accepted it because I have no job and my husband was our family's breadwinner," she said.

The house is to be awarded by Ayala Land Corp., the housing arm of ALI, in a residential area in Cavite, by June 2008.

She said she let Aimi and Rose stay until because P1M and 75 square meters, respectively.

But the widow and her three children have yet to move into the house, which will supposedly take six months to build.

They are still living in her sister's home in Muñoz-second village, the tragic City, the way they did when her husband was alive.

Not to school expenses

De Jesus said she had asked the company's representatives if ALI would shoulder her children's educational expenses.

"Sinabi nila sa akin, sa ibang usapan na lang," she said. "I also said I was willing to accept P1 million in cash, and that I would entrust the concessions of the house (upkeep) to them (ALI) themself."

De Jesus' youngest child is a first grader, and her eldest, a high school junior.

Asked if similar arrangements had been made with the families of the other victims, De Jesus said some families had contacted her to ask if she had accepted the settlement offer.

But she would not reveal their names.

"Sinabi nman (that) na dapat kay sa amin ako offer because I have no money. Baby (baby) ng ko accepting it, and said I shouldn't have done so," she said.

De Jesus explained that she had no financial resources to hire a lawyer or to pay the legal expenses required in suing ALI for damages.

"Sino sabay ng mga daily expenses?" she said. "Kaya nagdesisyon na lang."

On the other hand, at least four persons whose relatives died in the explosion and 28 of the injured are planning to press charges against ALI, said Dione Jimenez, founding chair of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption.

"We have been receiving calls from many others concerned in filing similar charges," (inaudible) said reporter by phone.

He said the organization's lawyers are looking into other possible legal actions against ALI.

Most of them

But according to ALI corporate spokesperson Alfonso Reyes, the families of the majority of those killed in the explosion had accepted the company's offer of financial help.

"We have continued to help the victims and their families; we have provided significant financial assistance and other forms of assistance, and we have (also) the assurance that we will help them as matters relate the results of the investigation (could be)," Reyes said, adding:

"Most of the families have accepted [our] financial assistance, and most of the families have expressed their gratitude."

Reyes said ALI had likewise committed to help those who were injured in the explosion: "We provided for their medical costs, and if any of them required critical and medical assistance, we provided for that."

He said this so far, the total (amount) as part of the explosion in the ALI group—including the damage to Gaisano 1, losses in revenue, and financial assistance extended to the injured and the families of the dead—stood at (close to P220 million).

But he warned that ALI was properly covered: "We have fully substantial insurance cover for general property damage, general liability, as well as business interruption. We had that we have sufficient coverage to help temper the financial impact on the company."

Tenants

As for the small tenants whose operations had been affected by the explosion, Reyes said ALI was continuing to seek the best possible solutions, including offering them temporary or semi-permanent spaces in malls around shopping complexes.

"We understand that is a very difficult time (for them). We are helping them (as in any) way we can, like assuming their rental deposits, providing spaces for them, and (assuring) (inaudible) them," he said.

The explosion has affected some 1,000 tenants, representing 10 percent of the total 1,800 tenants in the Glorietta shopping complex.

ALI mall operations, (inaudible), among others, Glorietta and Greenbelt, account for 17 percent of the property firm's total annual revenues. With reports from Jimmy C. Ortiz

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INQUIRER

OPINION

Price shock

EDITORIAL

THE REDUCTION IN THE TARIFF ON OIL IMPORTS from 3 percent to 2 percent, a new policy which takes effect towards the end of the month, seems like a carefully thought-out, calibrated response by the Arroyo administration to the looming oil price shock. But the policy may end up more wasteful than effective.

After the price of oil temporarily hit $100 per barrel last week, the government redoubled its efforts to muffle the impact of rising oil prices on the Filipino consumer. An energy summit has even been called to discuss coping strategies, including energy alternatives and energy conservation. And the other day, the one-percentage-point reduction in the tariff was announced.

The idea, it seems, is to prevent a surge in inflation. On Tuesday, President Macapagal-Arroyo laid down the case. "If we don't do anything and the price of diesel goes up, then we will have a demand from the transport sector to increase fares. And if we cannot forestall an increase in fares, there will be a demand to increase wages. And if we cannot forestall the demand to increase wages, then we will have a spiraling of all the other prices."

The problem is, the reduction in the import charges that oil importers pay will have only a fleeting effect on the consumer. We are not prepared to call the effect minor; a decrease of 46 centavos per liter of diesel (as estimated by Finance Secretary Margarito Teves) adds up to several pesos' worth of savings every single time a passenger jeepney or a private sector employee's AUV lines up at the gas station. At a time when every peso counts, that is not nothing.

But any relief will only be temporary; when the new price increase takes effect, those savings will be wiped out. And what does the government get for it? A loss, the administration estimates, of about P11 billion if the tariff reduction were in place for a year.

The Palace has already tried to spin the numbers by calling the revenues expected from an unreduced tariff scheme a "windfall." In other words, something not originally expected, an amount that can be written off without too much trouble. But the question the President raised the other day, by way of justifying the reduction in the tariff, actually remains unanswered. "What will we do with the P11 billion if prices surge and people suffer?" Ms. Arroyo had asked.

With the fleeting impact of the tariff reduction and the inevitable wave of new price increases, the question becomes: What will we do when prices surge and people suffer?

There are no easy solutions. If the tariff reduction, already rried over in 2008, is a quick fix, the proposal to suspend the 12-percent value-added tax on petroleum products for maybe six months seems like a short cut.

It doesn't help that its proponent, Sen. Manuel Roxas II, whose work as trade secretary under this administration and the previous one allows him to style himself as "Mr. Dalenghe," has reduced his counter-proposal to populist sound bytes. He argues that the suspension is not "going to be a loss to the government," on the hypothesis that the projected savings a consumer enjoys from the temporary suspension will make consumption spending, and thus add to VAT collections as other products. "In government will also catch it in the next go-round," Roxas said.

Except that an oil price shock can also work the other way: it can dampen consumption, and thus lower VAT collections.

Roxas also blithely argued that the government could readily absorb the P20-30 billion in forgone VAT revenues that the suspension will cause. We must question this assumption. It would be pound-foolish to experiment with the government's hard-earned fiscal position at the exact time we need its relative strength to watch for us.

We worry that Roxas' position on rising oil prices smacks of political positioning. Consider the untidy name he has given his proposal. "Despite this rejection [of the proposed suspension by the Palace], I will continue to pursue this advocacy of Zero VAT on Oil," he concluded in a press statement issued the other day.

Zero VAT? Perhaps a middle ground can be found.

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Instead of tariff cut, lift 12% VAT on oil

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS RIGHTLY directed the tariff on crude oil and diesel be cut two percent, from the present 3 percent to 2 percent, allegedly to cushion the effects of spiraling fuel prices. Big deal! That would mean a reduction of only 46 centavos per liter of diesel, which now costs P39 a liter—and even much less in the prices of gasoline. That would hardly make a dent on the prices of fuel and on oil products as well. There's a token gesture, but it's one the people and the government will remember to help the consumers.

Sen. Manuel Roxas II is right when he told the Kapihan sa Manila Bay Monday that it's more "technical," only "small change," in the current rise of oil price increases, pretty soon gas prices will go up by 92 per liter by the Bin gasoline, easily negating the 46-centavo reduction in pump prices resulting from the tariff cut. It would have been better if the government had suspended the 12-percent VAT on petroleum products. That would have stimulated the economy and gasoline prices by P4 or P5 per liter and shred by P4.

In the first place, the VAT on fuel may be, technically, a form of double or multiple taxation. That is because a per VAT on fuel and then again per VAT on products made and transported with the use of that fuel. VAT is a tax paid directly by the consumer, regardless of his income and employment. Tariff, on the other hand, is paid only by those who actually import the goods put in commerce. It is the big oil companies that will benefit from the tariff cut; it would not make fuel prices go down automatically, and in effect, if any would be negligible. Even Finance Secretary Margarito Teves has called the oil companies no better than price gouger than the tariff has been on.

And our economic managers will save from one to two weeks before deciding to lower the tariff. By spacing, they will be able to see if the clamoring for people out of the industries that they should otherwise get immediately.

Roxas said the hightax that the income from the suspended VAT will not be lost to the economy "because of the government spending it, it would be the people who would spend it—it is the people, in the business, who would have a share effect. The savings in the people would feel the economy better than government expenditures."

Cut him said, but I add, most of it would go to private pockets anyway if the government has the help.

"Our consumption-dependent economy will suffer as our people's purchasing power continues to weaken due to high oil prices," Roxas mentioned. "We will only let the people's suffering continue if we do not act now to suspend the VAT."

DBM said in fact apologies that if we don't do anything to suspend the oil diesel, there would be a demand for transport fare hikes, there an increase in wages, and that would mean a spiraling of other prices.

This, but since the two-percent tariff cut would not halt fuel price increases, the following questions can be asked: What happens next? What do we do when prices surge and people suffer? Mr. Dalenghe," has reduced his counter-proposal to populist sound bytes. He argues that the suspension is not "going to be a loss to the government," on the hypothesis that the projected savings a consumer enjoys from the temporary suspension will make consumption spending, and thus add to VAT collections as other products. "In government will also catch it in the next go-round," Roxas said.

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We worry that Roxas' position on rising oil prices smacks of political positioning. Consider the untidy name he has given his proposal. "Despite this rejection [of the proposed suspension by the Palace], I will continue to pursue this advocacy of Zero VAT on Oil," he concluded in a press statement issued the other day.

Zero VAT? Perhaps a middle ground can be found.

Sen. Roxas pointed out that the increased tax on the collection of VAT on oil would mainly be temporary (while the price of fuel is too high). It would be reimposed once prices go down to normal levels, which was exactly what Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said of the tariff reduction on oil. The tariff cut, he said, would depend on the price of oil, and the whole 3-percent tariff would be reimposed once oil prices drop below the trigger price.

So what's the difference between the Pax and Roxas' proposal? The difference is good, the government doesn't waste the money that it can spend out, and Roxas himself doesn't want the taxes that he originally collected, for basically, however, taxes won't be reduced. The VAT wasn't there before; it was imposed only because of government greed and graft. So we would just be going back to where we were before.

But let's stick to the cheaper maintenance bills, which were done the moment of the Highfast. Rep. Raynaul Bunye, principal author of the Oil Price Stabilization Fund, and Rep. Joseph Abaya Jr., co-author, were there, too. Roxas is the principal author of the Tariff and Customs Code, which was signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo. There are only minor differences between the two bills, they said, and they express the two versions to be reconciled by the bicameral conference committee later this month.

The most conspicuous difference is the manner by which prices will be regulated. The Roxas version provides for a regulatory body while the Senate version has the President first declaring an emergency and then imposing price ceilings on certain drugs. Both versions, however, authorize companies to push prices down. Abaya warns the multinationals to remember that if they do not let market forces work, then the government will intervene.

We spoke to Angara over lunch. I told him that they are in good only if the people appointed to it. Look at the Energy Regulatory Board and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System. They took the lockers of the electricity and water franchises holders.

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A university for the Philippines

PASSION FOR REASON

René C. Pangalangan

THAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY in a democratic society? It is to be beholden in order to own interests: one, to the nation whose the university was created to serve, and to the same time, to the universal good of learned peers without whose imprimatur a university is powerless. These two master's vanity talk, and voices deny us, they speak past the other in alien tongues.

The University of the Philippines' centennial celebration unites those dual commitments. On Tuesday, it kicked off the year with a public service by UP's famed school and symphonic groups, and on Wednesday the academics gathered for a lecture by Harvard researcher Gerda Zeiler's Nobel Laureate in Physics, when he received an honorary doctorate. UP president Emerlinda Roman will lead such samples from Diliman, to Baño Pinto, to Los Baños, all the way to Tacloban, choosing the most ways to mark the occasion, as befits the strengths of each locale.

The UP Centennial Commission, chaired by Sen. Edgardo Angara, who was the UP president when I was a law student, will have the Centennial Lectures, just to mention a few, from the social sciences, former UP president Dodong Nemenzo and Pepe Abueva, and scientist Randy David, from the natural sciences, alumna biologist Ed Gomez and physicist Jaro Hollman, and from the arts and letters, artist Jimmy Abad and composer Ramon Santos.

The UP touches not as world-class and rightful neighbors, and will feature lectures by the Jesuit mathematician Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, S.J., former president, and by former UP Diliman Alumni Orlina, the 2007 "Scientist of the Year" and loyal UP alumnus.

The Centennial Commission will also launch a fund campaign on some P6 billion for the ensuing years, scholarships and faculty grants, consisting of matching funds raised by alumni to top the national government's budgetary commitments. It is good news that we have new targets to follow the American tradition of alumni giving to the university.

Already, Silicon Valley entrepreneur engineer Dioscoro Ramos has pledged $500,000, the UP Alumni Engineers (UPAE) $100,000, and Fr. Magdaleno B. Albarracin Chemistry head of business administration will match the UPAE's $400,000 pledge. It shows how much the alumni cherish the education they received at the UP (as alumni who so generously gave to Madrid to hail where I was born there).

But we also have a long way to go to educate the rest public and our government on why public education matters. Not supported by taxpayers' money. All over the world, not just in Europe but even among our Southeast Asian neighbors, governments fund their national, or imperial, or state universities. The philosophy of the "private" university, in fact, is the notion—exception rather than the rule, for by far the best-funded universities in the Philippines stands out in America.

Nevertheless, the popular image of the student is that of Jose Rizal's Filosofo Tasio: bookish, out of touch with reality, neither at work, dangling at best. Yet if there were no universities, we'd have, at the height of the Mt. Carrington attack-hero of the 1990s, did Congress dismantle the dozens of UP's philosophy departments. Ricardo Jhamal, student of Bertrand Russell at Chicago, for his thesis on "pure three democracy"? Why would the nation elect the storied Pontes of the Philippines and the CIA Central Intelligence Agency be particularly about a theory that barely understood?

Universities are indubitably good for various states, which insist on the soil of freedom, but they also tend to judge universities by the saving of their economies. Democracies apply the one of popularity and ignore the scholar's mission to seek new, if unwanted, truths. We are the university

[illegible] Roxas's letter to constitute from the to.

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Comments: n.pangalangan@gmail.com

Conflict-driven strategy

ANALYSIS

Amanda Darraugh

PRESIDENT MAHMOUD ABBAS PUT THE security of Gaza first during at the start of the new year. Hamas militants in Gaza have been launching rockets at the new Army battalions, and a Jewish-Israeli man was shot and 25 companies of home defense militias to threaten this subsequent insurgency by 2010.

The big push against the New People's Army is part of the government's 60-day campaign by 2008 to crackdown the 39-year communist rebellion and other terrorist organizations. It was emphasized by the President's order to step up the military's focus on the Communist insurgency but follows an extensive bombing campaign by the Philippine Air Force (PAF) and Philippine Navy (PN) against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Sulu and Basilan provinces in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The PAF and PN campaign against the ASG has been ongoing since the Philippine Marines' all-out campaign in 2000 to crackdown the 700-man terror

Banks not for common folk?

LETTERS

IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO OPEN A bank account nowadays.

In one bank, the opening balance is only P500 for an ATM account that earns interest, but a married couple who wishes to open a joint account must present three valid identification cards. Unbelievably, the postal ID does not seem to rank for minimum checks and is sometimes underrated. Hence, a couple who wish to open a joint account can not because one of them can present only a voter's ID. The married women cannot even use her marriage certificate as a valid ID—although the marriage certificate states—simply because she or others contend her maiden name only.

In other banks, the ATM maintaining balance is much higher than P5,000. There is no corresponding significant deduction from the accounts in "penalty" should the maintaining balance fall below that. This is itself discouraging the banks' desire from maintaining their deposit with the bank...eventually leaving the depositors in evident fear to transfer their funds to other banks with very low opening balance and lower maintaining balance requirements.

I am therefore appealing to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Philippine government to look into this matter and try to make the opening of savings accounts "user friendly", especially for the non-professional ones—inasmuch as I myself want to open a savings account, the problems I point out above are discouraging me from doing so.

—MARIA L. GAVIRA,
mgavira@yahoo.com.ph

UNILAB, UP INK MOA ON DR. C. DAYRIT PROFESSORIAL CHAIR.

United Laboratories, Inc. (UNILAB), the country's largest and leading pharmaceutical and healthcare company, gives a grant to the University of the Philippines Foundation, Inc. to establish the Dr. Conrado G. Dayrit Centennial Professorial Chair in Medicine and Basic Sciences.

The Professorial Chair will be awarded to qualified faculty members of the University of the Philippines (UP) System in the disciplines where the late Dr. Dayrit made significant contributions, namely: Medicine, Pharmacology, Biology, Biotechnology, Chemistry, Botany, and Zoology. The Professorial Chair takes effect in January 2008, which is also the start of UP's centennial year celebration.

The MOA signing was led by Unilab's top management, UP officials, and members of the Dayrit family. Seated (from left) are Mrs. Milagros M. Dayrit widow of Dr. Conrado Dayrit, Unilab President and CEO Carlos C. Ejercito, Unilab Chairman Joselyn Campos Hess, UP President Emerlinda R. Roman, and former Health Secretary Manuel M. Dayrit. Standing (from left) are UP Manila Chancellor Dr. Ramon Arcadio, Unilab Vice Chairman Clinton Campos Hess, and UP Los Baños Chancellor Dr. Luis Rey Velasco.

Save the Kaliwa Watershed from dam project

I AM ENGAGED IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT work in the Kalinga-Apayao province and in the Kaliwa Watershed, Southern Sierra Madre. We must exert all efforts to preserve this God-given resource. Aside from being a source of water, the watershed is an ecotourist destination with high environment potential. It is also home to three indigenous people (IP) groups—the Kalaws (Remontados), Dumagats and Bennuanakes. These IPs claim the area as their ancestral domain. However, they face displacement from the land. The Kaliwa Watershed is being used as a site for the Laiban Dam Project.

The present administration and the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System are reviving the project, which was abandoned during the Marcos administration. The dam would displace under water the area now occupied by eight barangays and endanger lives and property in downriver communities—from Tanay, Rizal to the coastal areas of Infanta and Real in Quezon, Province. The project would flood the land alongside Marikina River, which suggests that the site is earthquake-prone.

With the Laiban Dam Project, the IPs are expected to suffer cultural disintegration and ecological degradation. In fact, they are now starting to show the fears—fearing their forests get to all the soil. They illegally cut trees, even using cut that it would be better to use the trees, rather than leave them to vandalism. Displacement, once lived, will more vulnerable a lack of the IPs' culture and heritage. The IPs are at risk of losing their cultural identity because of the project.

A huge 'thank you' to all Inquirer staff

TO ALL INQUIRER STAFF, THANK YOU VERY much for making me and my family's 2007 a very special one. This event now gets a chance to be featured in the Inquirer, how much more to be on the front page. (Thanks to good public relations in game of life," Inquirer, 1/2/1-07)

At 10 that wasn't enough, I was included in the year-end list of names in one of the top 10 athletes who made a big last year. That I was the only non-professional athlete to be on said roll made it even sweeter. (Inquirer, 12/30/07)

Once again, let me thank the Inquirer and its staff very much! I hope to live up to these one of these days. I hope to have to spend even a few of those who read the article. One little wish: I hope the officials of the Philippine Football Federation will continue to do more to improve Philippine football. I would be glad to help in whatever little way I could to make football bigger than what it is today.

God bless Philippine football, the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inquirerers and the Filipino people!

—JOSEPH CESAR V. DELA SALLE JOB HOEL,
hoeldave@yahoo.com

Retraining teachers not enough to solve crisis

"SUPERVISION FOR IMPROVED QUALITY, ADMITS Deped chief," (Inquirer, 1/7/08) To address the problem, retraining teachers is just one of the solutions. The same up with the right curriculum measures, I suggest that all factors contributing to the deterioration of our educational system be considered, including supervision, class size, in-

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P 8 ++

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Book prices down–DepEd

THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WILL continue to pursue reforms in its problem-plagued textbook procurement system, according to a report in Education Inventory 2008 A. Lapus.

"The impact of these continuing reforms for really cutting-edge, low-cost textbooks being procured by the DepEd from the private sector," Lapus said in the department's 2007 State of Basic Education Report.

"From P70 and P120 in 1998, the average cost of textbooks for elementary and the secondary level textbooks has been brought down to P37 and P58, respectively," it said.

Lapus said these were some of the "small victories" achieved by the department that "signify a deliberate and definitive turnaround in the status of education."

Lapus noted that the department has been confronted every year by the problem of dilapidated and overcrowded classrooms, overworked teachers handling crowded classes and ever limited resources for learning, like textbooks, science equipment, computers and learning guides for teachers. Jerry E. Esplanada

Rapanut: 84

FORMERLY "GERTRUDE G. RAPANUT, PIONEER mayor of Sta. Catalina, Ilocos Sur and a passionate political figure in the province, died on January 6.

Rapanut, a lawyer who served as the town mayor from 1967 to 1998, was 84.

He remains lie in the family residence at Poblacion, Sta. Catalina. Interment will be on Jan. 17 at the Sta. Catalina Municipal Cemetery.

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Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

83-year-old factory to close, render 1,200 workers jobless

SAN PABLO CITY—AT LEAST 1,200 WORKERS ARE to lose their jobs in a coconut processing factory here that would shut down by the end of the year.

The workers here asked for help to keep the factory on its 83-year-old trademark in this city, reps.

Jay Jorge, representative in Congress of Laguna's third district, has confirmed that the management of Franklin Baker Philippines Coconut Co has decided to shut down operations by the end of the year because of financial losses.

A leading manufacturer and distributor of desiccated coconut and specialty coconut products in the United States and other countries, Franklin Baker has two manufacturing facilities in the Philippines, located in San Pablo City and Davao del Sur.

She said a big percentage of that Pablo City's employees come from Franklin Baker and it had helped many families "through time."

Majority of the 1,200 workers—400 of them regular and 800 contractual—are city residents.

Many of the workers in San Pablo City have offered to work in Davao del Sur but they refused because they do not want to be away from their families.

"Many workers who will be unemployed are enraged and will find it difficult to find another one," said Reily Sarabia, 51, during an interview outside the factory along the Maharlika Highway in San Pablo City.

Declining supply

Jorge explained that the high price of coconuts and declining supply due to typhoons did not make it profitable for the company to sustain the operations of its San Pablo facility.

Some of the workers believe the declining coconut supply is also due to the conversion of big coconut farms into subdivisions by housing developers.

Jorge had negotiated with Robert Chandran, chief executive officer of Intl Anglo Chemical, the mother company of Franklin Baker, to continue its operations in San Pablo or at least delay the closure.

From June 2008, the target date of the closure was moved to December 2008.

Death of a promise

Chandran, according to Jorge, had created lots of possible investments here that would generate employment, possibly a call center, a science park or hotel and restaurant.

The successor, however, became a question mark when Chandran died in a helicopter crash in Indonesia just last Monday, on July 7.

Jorge said she, with San Pablo City Mayor Vicente Amante, Labor Secretary Arturo Brion, and the management of Franklin Baker would series explanatory talks on alternative investments in the city.

Talks would also center on what investors could be taken to give jobs to the factory workers. Rizha Dalhe-ine Collins, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Court junks amparo case for 2 held after clash

ECHAGUE, ISABELA—A COURT here dismissed the petition for a writ of amparo (protection) filed by relatives of two soldiers granted custody of two suspected New People's Army rebels convicted of illegal possession of firearms, bullets and explosives.

In his Jan. 3 order, Judge Bonifacio Ong of the regional trial court here ruled that Reyes and Cedillo de la Cruz, suspected members of the NPA's southern front, "are not illegally detained and therefore not deprived of liberty."

The parties received copies of the decision here this week.

Legal recourse

The writ of amparo is the last extremely available to any person whose right to life, liberty and security, his lives and relatives or is threatened with violation by an unlawful act or omission by public officials or employees and by private individuals or groups.

Ong said there was no basis for the claims of Rose Marie Galgana Valles for the issuance of a writ of amparo. This prompted the group's lawyer, Efraim Lanuza, to move for the petition's dismissal.

Some officials, represented by Judge Advocate General Officer Abdel Tan Simorelle Ibrang and lawyer Estrellita Aquino, did not object to the motion to dismiss the petition.

The military's lawyers said Reyes and De la Cruz were not abducted because they "voluntarily submitted" to the Army's custody.

No presentation

On Dec. 18 last year, the court asked officials of the Army's 502nd Infantry Brigade to present the suspected rebels "and show cause for [their] detention or confinement" in a Dec. 21 hearing.

The court issued the order after Tayabacan Captain Valley Barangay Pres. Fr. Romualdo Edgardo Cedki, filed a petition for a writ of amparo. Cedki is also the justice and peace desk head of the Diocese of Baguio's Social Action Center.

The military, however, did not present Reyes and De la Cruz in court on Dec. 21.

Barang told Ong that they failed to present the suspected rebels because they lacked time and personnel to prepare the two for the hearing.

Barang, however, told the court that Reyes and De la Cruz sought "voluntary refuge" under the Army's 502nd IB "with our being convinced of liberty."

Ong then issued an order instructing the military to present Reyes and De la Cruz to the court in a Jan. 3 hearing. The two suspected rebels appeared in that hearing.

Cedki had asked the court order to allow him to visit Reyes and De la Cruz. Ong has yet to decide on Cedki's request. Villamor Hoopo Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon

NEWSBRIEFS

Fishermen declared missing found

TALISAY CITY—Eight fishermen feared to be Easter's Easter sunday declared missing have been recovered after 10 days of drifting in the Pacific Ocean, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) regional office reported.

The OCD identified the eight fishermen, all residents of the City of Bontoguan, as local captain Nestor Tuna, 43; his brother Felimon, 36; Kerby Bautista, 30; Edison Tuna, 19; Billy Centeno, 30; Leonardo Ollada Jr., 30; Jose Lastra, 30; and Roger Baco, 30.

The eight were lost to sea on Jan. 1 but were unable to return home and were declared missing.

Ray Sarino, OCD regional administrative officer, spotted the Coast Guard on saying the eight came back overnight of Jan. 3.

Jose A. Colmeta, Inquirer Visayas

Workers lose jobs, start protest

MAGALLON, Bacolod Sur—About 500 workers of the banana plantation owned by Lapanday Foods Corp. (Ladeco) have been ordered the management's decision to terminate their services starting February.

Since Tuesday, the workers have been camping out in front of the Ladeco Compound in Barangay Cuadrang and have been asking the management to reconsider its decision.

Ladeco is controlled by the family of former Agriculture Secretary Leonilo Lanuza, who had boasted of owning thousands of acres during his tenure.

The Inquirer tried to contact the Ladeco management's representative, who declined to identify himself, said nobody was allowed to comment.

Armando B. Elloso, Inquirer Bikolnet

E. Visayas new tour destination

TACLOBAN CITY—Easter's Visayas is emerging as a tourist destination although domestic tourists still account for the bulk of arrivals in 2007, according to the Department of Tourism regional office.

Kenny Torres, regional tourism director, said 125,481 tourists came to the region in the first 11 months of 2007.

The region hosted 205,360 tourists in 2006, she said.

One of the areas in the region that has a potential to become a major tourism destination is Calbiran Island, off Guiuan town in Eastern Samar. The island has been attracting tourists because of its white sand beaches and has been the site of several surfing competitions.

Jay A. Echeta, Inquirer Visayas

'I know my son is alive'

BASAO CITY—The family here of missing pilot Capt. Gerino Mercado has urged the Armed Forces of the Philippines to persevere in the search for him.

Mercado and his co-pilot, Capt. Bonifacio Soriano, were flying a Philippine Air Force (PAF) S-211 reconnaissance plane in search of the missing Dr. Hayssam, 17, Palestinian and 12 Filipinos when he crashed off Kalayaan Island on Nov. 29 when they were missing, too.

They lost radio contact to another plane and "zero visibility."

Efforts to locate them have failed and the PAF officially called off the search mission on Dec. 7.

But Mercado's mother, Idola, 61, said her instinct says her 31-year-old son had survived.

"I know my son is alive," she said.

Dennis Jay Santos, Inquirer Mindanao

Reds deny losing guerrilla fronts

LUCENA CITY—Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal denied a report made by the Armed Forces of the Philippines that at least 11 guerrilla fronts of the New People's Army have been dismantled by government forces last year and none was to be dismantled this year.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr. Inquirer Southern Luzon

HIGH TECH
Workers recap one more rumrunner than an ambulance on the runway of the Oriente City Airport in Mindoro Occidental to help secure a smooth landing for President Macapagal-Arroyo's Lear jet.

2 dead as boat sinks off Bohol

By Jolene R. Balinbin
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—TWO PERSONS died while two others were missing when a motorboat capsized off the coast of Ubay, Bohol Wednesday.

The boat was loaded with 14 passengers and two crewmen when it capsized.

Cmdr. William Iraya, chief of staff of regional Philippine Coast Guard office, said the Maj. Jeff Ubay by Carlos P. Garcia, an island municipality in Bohol formerly known as Pilar Island.

Chief Petty Officer Saturnino Encomio of the Coast Guard district Central Eastern Visayas identified the dead as Antonio Gran, 56 and Maria Gamotea, 56.

The missing passengers were Luciano Achal and Bella Actin.

Encomio said the boat capsized 30 meters from the shoreline of Tagas village when it was battered by strong waves.

More flyovers seen in Baguio City

BAGUIO CITY—THE WORSENing traffic problem here has moved the city government to consider building new flyovers and an underpass that could compromise its conservation projects for Baguio's centennial celebration next year.

Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr. informed city officials this week about plans to build a new flyover, pedestrian overpasses and an underground vehicular tunnel near the City Hall.

Studies

Bautista said studies have been commissioned to help the city government design its proposed underground tunnel in a road behind SOG Hill.

At least three other major traffic interventions are being considered to beat flyovers, he said.

A contractor-led flyover project that proposes to ease traffic and which passes through Burnham Road and Session Road in the vicinity is set to open this month, after being delayed by years by protests from Baguio residents.

Former Mayors Braulio Yaranon and Virginia de Guia objected to the Baguio flyover project because it relied on vantage terrain for the Marcos Highway underpass project.

City engineers are tasked with reducing Baguio's motorvehicle traffic problems. Solutions proposed could disrupt that work.

'Baguio's roads... were designed in 1909 for a population of no more than 25,000 people'

No foresight

Like most urbanizing communities in the country, Baguio's roads were not designed for heavy volumes of traffic.

The Baguio report by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives documented that more 25,000 vehicles travel through Baguio's roads daily, which were designed in 1909 for a population of no more than 25,000 people.

The report also pointed out on oversupply of public utility jeeps servicing the city. The jeeps represent half of the volume of Baguio's entire transport system.

Traffic management here is being managed by a number of agencies that have never been replaced. Howard Cabreros, Inquirer Northern Luzon

THE CONTROVERSIAL Baguio flyover that bridges Kennon Road and Marcos Highway gets some finishing touches from construction hands.

NEGOSYO Ang sagot sa kahirapan!

– Joey Concepcion

Another successful year has passed! The series of GoNegosyo forums and expos throughout the country, and the multimedia presence through the website, the TV program, the book and the broadsheet column have inspired and empowered over a million Filipinos during the year to pursue their dreams and reach for their goals. More GoNegosyo advocates and entrepreneurs rose to the occasion to share their time and talents to help Filipinos develop an entrepreneurial mindset.

Expect more this coming 2008 as we continue to spread the advocacy and encourage more people to GoNegosyo as a way out of poverty and to succeed in life.

The GoNegosyo Celebrity Edition book will be available soon! Watch out for the **longest book signing event** with the celebrity entrepreneurs!

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NEWS

Black Nazarene deaths pose challenge to Church

THE DEATH OF TWO BLACK Nazarene devotees last Wednesday poses a challenge to the Church and its evangelizing work.

Msgr. Pedro Quitorio, spokesperson of the said Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), said the tragedy means that the Church may need to bring Filipino Catholics to a more "mature" level of faith.

"That is the kind of faith that knows that it is in loving one's neighbor and living the Gospel that a person is brought nearer to God's blessings no less than the touching of a miraculous image of Jesus, said Quitorio.

"This has become a challenge to the Church, that the work of evangelization should deepen the faith. Make it stronger than this level," he said.

Deep understanding

He said a deep understanding of one's faith will help a person understand that God's blessings will not depend on the touching of a miraculous image but on how one lives out the gospel of God.

Quitorio clarified, however, that Church officials are not passing judgment on the kind of faith expressed by the majority of Filipinos, which strongly believes that by simply touching a miraculous image of Christ or that of a saint will grant a wish or a prayer.

"That is their level of appreciation. They believe that if they touch the image they will have good lives, they will be healed of their sickness. We respect this. We don't judge these acts," said Quitorio.

Levels of faith

He explained that there are levels of faith and the belief most Filipinos now still is the level of popular religiosity which he said involves elements of superstition, culture and folk belief.

"But this is faith just the same. We respect that," said Quitorio.

The Church should work to make this kind of faith stronger and deeper, he said.

Two devotees died during the annual procession of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo last Wednesday after being trampled in the stampede to get close to, within touching range of the miraculous image.

In 2006, the 400th year of the annual feast of the Black Nazarene, two devotees also died during the procession. *Beverly T. Stathridad*

BLACK NAZARENE

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Editor Evan G. Dipasupil

'SEIZED DRUGS SOLD'

QC crime lab evidence custodian, 2 others nabbed

By Jeannette I. Andrade

POLICE ARRESTED THE EVIDENCE CUSTODIAN of the Quezon City crime laboratory office (CLO), his suspected runner and alleged customer in separate buy-bust and entrapment operations Wednesday night in Quezon City.

PDG Joseph Vipalla, who has been with the CLO for more than eight years, was arrested in the area close to Old North Edsa mall. A search of his black Mitsubishi Gallant (PSP-854) yielded shabu inside boxes and other suspected shabu-related "EVIDENCE" perfume.

Also seized from Vipalla was P5,000 in cash, believed to be proceeds from the sale of shabu and illegal drug paraphernalia.

Drug charges are being readied against those who were arrested and are now in the custody of QCPD Station 10. Administrative charges will also be filed against Vipalla that would mean his dismissal from the police service.

Supt. Aquiles Cebida, Quezon City Police District (QCPD) Nuisance station 10 commander, said the illegal drugs worth P320,000 allegedly sold by Vipalla were evidence seized from drug offenders.

Cebida told the Inquirer the CLO would conduct an investigation to determine if Vipalla's alleged selling of confiscated drugs affected pending court cases.

Substances retrieved from the CLO custodian included those related to drug cases at

QC 4-B

A STREET newspaper cleans up trash dumped on Plaza Miranda at the conclusion of the Black Nazarene procession. GREG ALVA

Black Nazarene devotees leave behind tons of garbage in Quiapo

By Tina G. Santos

MOUNDS OF TRASH WERE collected yesterday after the celebrations of the feast of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo.

The garbage was apparently left behind Wednesday by devotees of the Black Nazarene despite an appeal made earlier by Manuel Conferido, an environmental group, for a "green" celebration.

An estimated 2.5 million devotees participated in the celebration of the Black Nazarene's feast on Wednesday.

An employee of the City Health Department's Public Services said they collected several truckloads of plastic bottles, styrofoam containers, sticks, candy and food wrappers.

Many sustained foot injuries after accidentally stepping on barbecue sticks carelessly thrown away by devotees, according to volunteer health workers.

The Ecowaste Coalition lamented the appeal for a green festival "is turning into pile of garbage left behind by New Year revelers on Plaza Miranda."

The environmental group sought the support of church and barangay leaders, and even asked prayers to help ecological consciousness in their homilies.

Barangay officials agreed to put up banners to remind the public about proper waste disposal.

Meanwhile, Mayor Alfredo Lim vowed to deploy more cops for next year's Feast of the Black Nazarene.

Two persons, Cecilia Pajarde and Alex Ibañez, died during this year's procession and several others were injured.

Lim combined with the medical facilities and said the city's Social Welfare Department would provide assistance.

But he said organizers and stallholders could not be faulted for what happened during the celebration.

"Nobody gives him any drugs to make him sway left or right. This is the biggest number ever recorded. Hindi nila sinasadya [the policemen who were deployed in the area were overwhelmed by the crowds]," Lim said.

A Filipino was held in Quiapo Church yesterday starting for the devotees who died during the procession.

A church official said that although they reportedly committed devotees not to rush toward the religious image, they could not control the mob when the Black Nazarene was brought out of the church.

Church officials promised to help devotees who were hurt during the procession. They added that they would review arrangements this year to come up with a better crowd control plan for next year.

Pillbox explosions hurt 3 members of demolition crew

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THREE PERSONS were injured by pillbox explosions during the demolition yesterday morning of some 250 shanties in Quezon City.

Gary Romero, 22, of Bantay-ay Dolores, Taytay, Rizal; and his neighbors John Cumalsa, 23, and Jesse Ramos, 21, all members of the demolition crew, were wounded by the explosions and were treated at the East Avenue Medical Center.

According to Quezon City Police District (QCPD) Gafoc Station 11, the explosions occurred at around 9 a.m. yesterday in the middle of demolition operations in a 2,500-square meter lot at the corner of 6th and 7th Streets in Barangay Mariana, Nova Manila.

Despite barricades set up by the 600 families living in the property, demolition teams allegedly forced by a claimant, the Unirow Development Incorporated, dismantled the shanties.

Some residents allegedly used improvised shotguns and pillboxes to attack the demolition teams.

Despite the explosions, the demolition continued after the victims were brought to the hospital. Members of the QCPD civil disturbance management personnel and the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) supervised the operations.

Residents claimed the demolition was illegal as there was no resolution yet from the Court of Appeals.

Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, who visited the site, supported the residents' position.

Irene Marasigan, one of the residents, said the Court of Appeals was still conducting hearings on the ownership of the property.

She said yesterday's demolition was the fourth attempt of the realty company to clear the property.

Taguig University will have own campus in 2009

By Julie M. Aurelio

THE PAMANTASAN NG LUNGSOD ng Taguig (PLT) will have its own campus next year inside the Junior Hall compound in Barangay Lower Bicutan.

This was announced by city vice mayor and university president Ernesto Elias as the PLT moved to its temporary quarters in the FTI Complex.

"It's initial plan has already been drawn for the construction of a PLT campus adjacent to the Junior Hall in Barangay Lower Bicutan in the city. A fully-operational campus is targeted by 2009," Elias said.

On Monday, the university reportedly threatened to the Insidiene Hall as the FTI Complex in Barangay Western Bicutan.

Evolution

"This transfer is the next step in the evolution of the PLT as a learning institution. We will not stop until our students belong to the best university in the country situated in a campus of its own," Mayor Freddie Tiñga said.

Tiñga, along with Commissioner Rogelio Villanueva and service Annie Abril, led the inauguration of the temporary PLT site on the third and fourth levels of the Bambino Mall.

Tiñga said parts of the mall were converted into 31 new classrooms, computer laboratory and administration office.

"The development signifies the interest of the city government to provide quality education to our youth," Abril said.

Investment

Tiñga told the students: "We are making an investment to you because we believe that you hold the key in the future of our nation. You are our future."

The PLT was launched in October 2006 through triple classes in open classrooms of Taguig schools like the F. M. Signal Elementary School in Barangay Signal Village, the Ricardo Pigao High School in Barangay Tuktukan, and the Taguig Elementary School in Barangay Ibayo Ata.

The local school board said PLT began with more than 1,000 students in just a year, more than its enrollment in over 6,000. Students do not pay tuition, only P500 in miscellaneous fees.

The PLT offers courses in Industrial and Information Technology, Entrepreneurial and Marketing Management, Business and Office Administration, Tourism and Travel Management, Hotel and Restaurant Management, Computer Science and Criminology.

BACK TO NORMAL
Members of the Manila Anti-Littering division clear Palma Street in Quiapo, Manila of vendors' stalls that contributed to the congestion in the thoroughfare.

QC crime . . .

From page A-17

far back as 1995, police said. The last case was filed in 2005.

The entrapment operations conducted jointly by the CIDG and the Kamuning Station 10 followed a buy-bust operation conducted by Station Anti-Illegal Drugs (SAID) personnel against Vigrollo's suspected cronies, Melissa Vallado, 34, of Sort Bonifacio, Tagaig City.

Galvez said Vallado was the wife of Vigrollo's friend, a former employee of a Quezon City regional trial court. So, alleged buyer, Maribel Clemente, of Sesat Gance Street in Quezon City, was also arrested.

During the buy-bust operations along Scout Chuzon in Barangay Bunte District, Vallado allegedly tagged Vigrollo as the source of the shabu.

Ex-banker arrested for P15-M scam

By Tina G. Santos

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF Investigation has arrested a former bank manager for his alleged involvement in a P15-million money laundering scam.

Agents of the NBI Special Task Force arrested Eric Alfaguilas of Camia Street, Merville Subdivision, Tunasan, Muntinlupa. Alfaguilas is now facing charges in the Pasig Regional Trial Court for alleged violation of Republic Act 9160 (Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001).

If found guilty, the suspect, now detained at the NBI jail, could face a maximum of four years imprisonment or a fine of P300,000 to P500,000, the NBI said.

Assistant Dalmacio Diaz, chief of the NBI-STF, said the suspect, former branch manager of a San Juan City-based commercial bank, allegedly allowed Maria Mina to open an account in March 2002 although he had incomplete documents.

The suspect also reportedly allowed a P15 million manager's check payable to the Bureau of Customs to be deposited in Mina's personal account.

Alfaguilas allegedly authorized several fund transfers and check withdrawals from the account, Dalmacio added.

The bank management initiated an administrative case against the suspect for alleged violations of bank policies and procedures.

"There is no doubt Alfaguilas committed fraud and willful breach of the trust and confidence reposed upon him by the bank when he accepted the questioned endorsed check for deposit in a personal account, disbursed the proceeds thereof by effecting fund transfer transactions to several other accounts, and allowed himself to be used by, and connived with, another person or group of persons to enable to perpetrate the fraudulent deed, instead of upholding the interest of the bank, it was he who facilitated the fraud," the NBI said.

The suspect was dismissed from his job and charged in court.

NBI agents arrested the suspect on the strength of a warrant issued by Judge Amelita Nebrasa of the Pasig City Regional Trial Court.

DID YOU KNOW

TZOA is the 108th birthday of the late musician "Mang" Oca Matias, who was born in Pandacan, Manila. Oca's Rama was the star of the 1938 romantic "Dalagang Bukid." He first Tagalog full-length feature film.

The actor, singer and playwright also helped propagate the zarzuela and kundimanan Filipino art forms. For her "devotion to original Filipino theatre and music," Oca's Rama was named National Artist in 1987.

De la Rama was married to poet and later teacher Amado V. Hernandez.

Cyril Bondoc's Insider Research

METRO BRIEFS

'Ducut' goes to court

DEFEATED Pasig City mayoral candidate Robert "Ducut" Jaworski said he was bent on filing administrative and criminal charges against Pasig City Hall officials whom he accused of compromising the validity of contested ballot boxes stored in city hall for safekeeping.

Jaworski, who lost to incumbent Vicente Eusebio by over 6,000 votes, alleged there was intentional fraud and tampering in key areas, particularly in the city's second district.

Kristine L. Alave

Grisly find in QC house

THE DECOMPOSED, naked body of a 78-year-old woman, believed to be Anicela Peregrino, was found yesterday morning inside the bathroom of her home in Barangay Tandang Sora, Quezon City, more than six months after she was last seen alive. Barangay watchmen discovered Peregrino with her hands and feet tied, lying flat on her back on the bathroom floor. Before the discovery, the victim's sister, Norma Gonzales, 69, sought police assistance after she decided to check the house where her sister lived by herself. Gonzales said she last talked along with Peregrino had left for the United States last year. PO2 Darwin Pua of the QCPD Station 10 said the lessees that Gonzales had initially decided to check on Peregrino's house after she was allegedly victimized by robbers recently, and was worried when the "landlord" house could have been looted.

Jeannette I. Andrade

SM launches barangay health center project

SM FOUNDATION recently launched its newest project, the Aklan's Barangay Health Center, with Brgy. Kapitan Health Center in Quezon City as the first recipient. The Center covers three barangays: Brgy. Obrero, Brgy. Pinyahan and Brgy. Don Enrico Lorenzo. "The adoption of the center is in line with the Foundation's objective of taking care of the neighboring communities of SM malls by providing the best quality service and continuous health care to communities. SM Foundation renovated, repaired and provided the center with new additions and equipment. The Center for the Elderly and a Children's Activity Center, transforming it into a Multi-Purpose Health Center.

3 rob gang suspects killed in shootout

By Tina G. Santos

THREE SUSPECTED members of a payroll robbery gang were killed in a shootout with policemen in Kondo, Manila yesterday.

Supt. Jose Espino, chief of Manila Police District Station 1, said the incident took place at the corner of Mendoza and Road 20 in Kondo around 11:30 a.m.

Police said they received a tip earlier that a group was planning to rob a Kondo establishment.

Espino said the motorcycle-riding suspects shot at policemen after they were stopped at a checkpoint, prompting authorities to fire back. One of the suspects died while two others did not make it after they were brought to a hospital.

The suspects were identified only by their aliases "Arjoen," "Ondong" and "Jonjon."

READER'S DIGEST CHOICE

Thai pharmacist named Asian of the Year

KRAISANTU

THEY CALL HER HIMMA HIL. Kraisantu Kraisin, African love her for her warmth and support for her ministries.

Kraisantu Kraisitthi, a 59-year-old Thai pharmacist known for her courage and tireless work of helping the global poor by bringing affordable generic AIDS and malaria drugs to help victims has been named as Reader's Digest Asian of the Year for 2008.

Although international pharmaceutical companies began manufacturing effective AIDS drugs in the 1990s, they were so expensive that the Thai government couldn't afford to provide them to poor patients. So by the end could buy them. By the early part of this decade, more than 450,000 Thai had died of AIDS-related illnesses, the lack of access to antiretroviral medication.

But in 2002, thanks in large measure to Kraisantu Kraisitthi, Thailand started mass producing inexpensive AIDS medicines. Dutch company pharmaceutical Today, Thailand has one of the best public AIDS treatment programs in the developing world, with more poor patients getting free medicine.

There are not the only hero-

ic stories of Kraisantu's career and dedication—her drugs are used to treat cancer patients in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam too, and she has devoted the last five years to helping African battle AIDS, and another major killer—malaria.

A hard-driving, non-nonsense leader, Kraisantu quickly developed manufacturing drugs for diseases ranging from leishmaniasis to diarrhea. Her medicines were cheap because she didn't license expensive brand names—she used the same key ingredients as those in drugs first created by Western multinationals. Making such drugs—known as generics—was legal since the patents on the originals had expired.

S. Korea charter court allows probe of President-elect Lee

SEOUL... SOUTH KOREA'S CONstitutional court on Thursday ruled that a special counsel investigation into fraud allegations against President-elect Lee Myung-bak could go ahead, even though part of his probe was unconstitutional.

The outgoing government approved the special counsel in late December, nothing Lee the first South Korean president-elect to face a criminal investigation. Conservative Lee won a landslide victory in the Dec. 19 presidential election with pledges to boost the economy.

A court spokesperson said that since only part of the process was unconstitutional, the investigation could proceed.

Lee will be interrogated on Feb. 25 at least the same time the probe finishes, meaning there will not be enough time to bring formal charges before he takes office, legal experts said. He is immune from prosecution while in office under local law.

Lee's detractors had requested the judges review the planned investigation in an attempt to halt the probe.

But the court ruled that only one element—a clause allowing the special prosecutor to force-fully summon witnesses for questioning—was unconstitutional.

Kookuk University political science professor Cho Kuk-seo said even if the scope of the investigation was narrowed down, witnesses would still be compelled to testify or face harsh criticism from a public keenly watching the case.

"It is a political scandal like this one... they will have no suspicions even without the special process to bring them," Cho said.

Regular prosecutors had already cleared Lee of any involvement in a company that is accused of defrauding investors of millions of dollars. Lee has denied any wrongdoing or links to the firm, BBK.

But just before the December election, his liberal opponents released a video of a speech by Lee (which they said showed he had been lying, which appeared finely demanded for an investigation.

Political analysts have said that a major concern for Lee supporters will be whether the investigation may tarnish his image as a liberal, predominantly election, when it is to come to the office he will be in office.

Reuters

LEE

Samsung under investigation for bribery

SEOUL... AN INDEPENDENT counsel said Thursday that he had launched a probe into bribery and fraud allegations against Samsung, South Korea's biggest business group.

The probe follows claims by Samsung's former chief lawyer that the conglomerate created a multimillion-dollar slush fund to bribe prosecutors, govern-

ment officials and journalists.

Samsung, which wields enormous influence in South Korea, has denied the claims and said it was concerned the probe was tearing its reputation.

"The major allegations are unfound. So I'm not sure that I can get rid of them clarified within the given time," the independent counsel Dye Jeong-hwan told reporters.

The probe can last up to 105 days, but separate investigations by state prosecutors are ongoing.

Kim Yong-chul, who headed Samsung's in-house legal team for seven years until 2005, has accused the firm of opening bank accounts in the names of senior staff, including himself, to manage the slush fund.

Samsung has 56 subsidiaries and accounts for more than 20 percent of South Korea's exports. Some critics refer to South Korea as the "Republic of Samsung."

The firm's assets are valued at $200.8 billion and its exports were worth $66.5 billion last year.

AFP

PENGUIN CONGRESS Macaroni penguins (*Eudyptes chrysolophus*) gather on the cliffs above the Gentoo Penguin colony on the Zavodovski Island, one of a century of Mount Island, Mount Island and the nearby McDonald Island, both the world's largest colonies of the species with over a million breeding pairs, on each reside.

Macau set to surpass HK as tourist destination

HONG KONG—THE NUMBER OF visitors to Macau jumped almost 23 percent last year, putting the fast-growing gambling haven on track to surpass neighboring Hong Kong as a tourist destination.

The tiny Former Portuguese-ruled enclave of less than half a million people registered more than 27 million arrivals in 2007, up 22.7 percent from the previous year, according to government statistics.

Hong Kong registered more than 28 million visitor arrivals, an increase of over 10 percent on 2006. If growth rates are maintained, Macau will take the lead this year.

Once skinny Macau swamped by Chinese rule in 1999, five years after China regained control of the nearby Former British colony of Hong Kong.

Macau has seen its rise on the gaming of its casino such as Las Vegas investment and the booming of tourist arrivals on Chinese boards in recent years.

Several foreign-owned, Las Vegas-style casinos have gone up, including Las Vegas Sands' palatial Venetian Macau, which boasts the biggest casino on earth.

Not surprisingly, the biggest and one of the fastest growing sources of visitors to Macau last year was China, accounting for 55 percent of the total. The number of Chinese visitors grew 28 percent, according to the statistics.

Reuters

High definition TVs becoming slimmer still

LAS VEGAS—HIGH DEFINITION TELEVISIONS are slimming down while their picture and capabilities are beefing up.

Innovations at the world's largest consumer electronics show in Las Vegas underscore the trend, with Sony tweaking various with a 3-mm (.12-inch) thick Organic Light Emitting Diode (OLED) television sets.

While liquid crystal display (LCD) televisions are backlights, OLED's picture-creating pixels come from screens that can be made paper thin and bendable while using less power.

Sony of America chief executive Howard Stringer proclaimed OLED a new industry standard, saying "soon the term sounds like a Viking warlord."

"This is the future of television," Sony Atsuo Nishimuro while presenting a 4-inch-40 OLED display at the exhibit floors of the Consumer Electronics Show (CES).

OLED televisions hit store shelves in Japan in December and were launched in the US market this week at a price of $2,500 (1,730 euros).

Nishimuro told reporters reviews that the cost of the televisions will drop "eventually."

Samsung revealed at the conference a pair of OLED television prototypes it says show how to market in a couple of years.

Pioneer showed off a "concept model" 58-inch (147-centimeter) LCD high-definition television just 9 mm deep, saying it intended to have it ready for consumers such as those years.

Panelist's 1.5-inch (3.6-cm) thick LCD model is already on the market.

Philips and Texas Instruments presented hd televisions with 0.9-inches.

Texas Instruments eyeglasses look exactly to televisions and offer slightly the images resolving such eyes.

The principle behind using 3-D images is that each of a person's eyes sees a different perspective and the brain combines the images to create a sense of depth.

"The picture runs in real-life, and has you know kicks in and says, 'I.D.'" Ron Bell of Texas Instruments told AFP while demonstrating the television sets.

Texas Instruments says the same technology is a "dead term" information that lets video game players compete head-to-head on viewing or shooter games, but only see their characters on the screen.

"Each player gets the full screen and no one sees anything," Bell said, referring to being able to take premature probe-without opponents are doing.

"It's pretty cool."

Philips' 3-D televisions don't require special glasses. The very split image signals to different pictures for different eyes.

"It can use a little bit of tweaking, but your eyes need to adjust to it," Bram Tessmans of Philips said on his and others gained at a model at the CES booth.

"It appeals to your senses. You get more excited. We see it in studies—people start recording because it is so immersive."

Philips began selling the 3-D televisions in Europe in December and plans to offer them in the United States this year.

Early interest in buying the Philips 3-D television come from retailers, movies, shopping centres and other businesses due to their hefty price tags, according to Tessmans.

The installed model, 20-inches (50 cm) diagonally, is priced $3,679 dollars (2,500 euros).

AFP

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ganzo

WHO: 151,000 Iraqis killed since US invasion

GENEVA—ABOUT 151,000 IRAQI CIVILIANS were killed in the three years following the US-led invasion of their country, according to World Health Organization (WHO) research published on Wednesday.

The new study, which said it is clear deaths could have ranged from 104,000 to 223,000 between March 2003 and June 2006, is the first comprehensive one since the war started.

The study drew on an Iraqi health ministry survey of nearly 10,000 households—few times the number of those interviewed in a disputed 2006 John Hopkins University study that said more than 600,000 Iraqis had died over the period.

While well below that figure, the United Nations agency's estimate exceeds the widely cited 60,000 to 87,000 death toll by the Iraqi Body Count, which uses media reports and hospital and morgue records to calculate its tally.

"There are a lot of uncertainties in making such estimates," WHO statistician Mohamed Ali, who coordinated the study, told reporters on a conference call.

He said uncertainty made counts of Baghdad and Anbar provinces unreliable for those conducting the survey, which included questions about other topics including pregnancy and disease.

Many families also fled their homes as a result of the violence, and some left the country, making it hard to give a precise assessment of the violence in Iraq. As a result, Ali said the margin of error for the toll was definitely high.

Still, he said the household survey's huge scale gave the findings more weight than previous attempts to estimate the numbers of Iraqis killed in battles between and among military forces, insurgents and sectarian fighters.

The Johns Hopkins University report, published by the British medical journal Lancet, which was based on a smaller-scale Iraqi survey, drew criticism from the White House and elsewhere for appearing to exaggerate the Iraq death toll.

Iraqi Health Minister Saleh al-Hasnawi described the latest WHO report as "very sound" and said the survey indicated "a massive death toll since the beginning of the conflict."

"I believe in these numbers," he told the conference call.

The White House said it had not seen the study, but measured the deaths of Iraqi civilians.

"The unmistakable fact is that the vast majority of these deaths are caused by the ruthless, murderous intentions of extremists committed to taking innocent life," said White House spokesperson Tony Fratto.

"It is also beyond dispute that more Iraqi citizens would be condemned to death and oppression if they were abandoned by America and our coalition partners."

The US Department of Defense said enormous precautions were taken to avoid civilian deaths and injuries.

More than half of the violent deaths documented in the WHO report occurred in Baghdad. Reuters

ALL TOO SIMILAR A parked car bomb exploded near the heart of para church in central Kirkuk, 250 km north of Baghdad, Jan. 9, wounding one civilian. Two months later, another parked car bomb detonated next to a church nearby, wounding two children. AFP

20 Pakistan cops killed in suicide bomb

LAHORE, PAKISTAN—AT LEAST 20 PAKISTANI riot policemen were killed in a suicide bomb attack outside the high court in the commercial heart of Lahore on Thursday, officials said.

The bomber set off his device when police asked him to stop his motorcycle outside the court, in the heart in a series of suicide attacks which have claimed hundreds of lives across Pakistan over the past year.

Up to 50 people, many of them police officers, were injured in hospital after the explosion in the city's main commercial district.

The bodies of at least 11 dead police officers, dressed in full riot gear with protective vests and helmets, were seen being carried by their fellow officers. Many of the dead were members of police in Lahore, told AFP.

"We lost 20 policemen here," Ahsan Ghumman, a senior police officer in Lahore, told AFP.

Bystanders and police officers, some with their clothes apparently blown off by the force of the blast, lay on the street screaming for help as security forces scrambled to cordon off the downtown area. AFP

RARE Invisible clouds cover Mawson Peak (2,745 meters high) on Big Ben—Australia's only active volcano—which dominates the Australian subantarctic territory of Heard Island. AFP

Drought in Australia driving deadly snakes into its cities, says official

SYDNEY — AUSTRALIA'S harsh drought is driving venomous snakes into urban areas in search of moisture, resulting in an increasing number of attacks on people, an official said Thursday.

Acting Victoria state Premier Rob Hulls issued the warning after a woman and her dog were bitten in the gardens of their Melbourne suburban home. The woman was rushed to hospital where she is in stable condition, but the dog died.

"There will be an influx of snakes and it's very important that people stay away from them," he said, blaming the drought and high temperatures for driving the reptiles from their natural habitat.

Hull said that in Victoria state alone, 137 people had been admitted to hospital for treatment for snake bites over the past year—23 more than in the previous 12 months.

Australia is known as home some of the world's deadliest snakes, with Victoria home to at least four particularly venomous species—the tiger, common brown, copperhead and red-bellied black snake. AFP

Kenya wildlife may have eaten victims of violence—Red Cross

NAIROBI—KENYA WORLD-famous savannah wildlife—big cats and scavengers mainly and birds—may have made off with and devoured the bodies of human victims of recent post-election violence, the Kenyan Red Cross said Thursday.

"There are also an unspecified number of unreclaimed bodies due to accessibility difficulties, and it was feared the bodies may have been consumed by animals and birds of prey," the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) said in a statement.

Aid workers fear that the Kenyan death toll could even shoot at least 600 killed after they confirm the number of bodies in the bush recently in the country's Rift Valley province, which hosts more than 80 percent of the 250,000 displaced.

The society said it had 1,200 people had been injured across the east African nation.

"The bodies have been left for reports and crops worth millions of shillings have appeared of the situation since many people are affected and lack their means of livelihood," the statement added.

"The affected communities cannot buy commodities after business premises were completely destroyed. Government prison building efforts are stalling but in calm newly-return to the homes plagued areas," it added.

The KRCS said it was struggling to install water systems entirely to displaced people's camps in Rift Valley towns of Nakuru, Eldoret, Uasingishi and Kericho, where these area "a health threat."

The society said there was a measles case in Eldoret, a volatile district where rival tribe clashed at late as early February.

"The case is under close observation to minimize the risk of cross transmission, which is high in congested and poor sanitation areas," the statement added.

Humanitarian bodies warn have been "overflowing medical camps," across the Rift Valley region. "Common ailments that affect the IDPs include waterborne diseases, respiratory tract infections and diarrhoea." it added.

Much of the fighting centered in the Rift Valley province, home to a mosaic of tribes, and known as an "Ark of Part" owing to repeated tribal fighting during electoral periods. AFP

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
Regional Office No. IV-A
[illegible] Building II, Brgy. Parian, Calamba City
January 11, 2008

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATIONS FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMITS (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/entities have filed with this Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permits:

Name and Address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National/Beneficiary	Position
[illegible]	Mr. Yoko Kawamura Japanese	Director / Corporate Support
[illegible]	Mr. Akihiro Ueno Kanda	General Manager
[illegible]	Mr. Kangchol Bae Korean	Country Manager
[illegible]	Ms. Hyeongsug Kwak Lee (nee Lee) Korean	Executive Vice President
[illegible]	Mr. Akihiro Kono Japan	VP & CFO Executive Manager
[illegible]	Mr. Junichi Fujimoto Japanese	Planning Director
[illegible]	Mr. Timothy Stanley Hudson American	Vice President for Operations
[illegible]	Mr. Chang-Hun Lee Taiwanese	Maintenance Consultant
[illegible]	Mr. Hui-Yung Chen Taiwanese	Consultant

Any party may intervene or participate in the above proceeding by filing a written verified petition with this Regional Office.

ATTY. RICARDO S. MARTINEZ, JR., CESO IV
Regional Director

Bush to visit cradle of Christianity on tour

JERUSALEM—US PRESIDENT George W. Bush, who has invoked his Christian faith to justify his policies over the past seven years, will embark on a pilgrimage this week to some of his religion's most sacred sites.

Bush's first visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories since taking office is primarily aimed at encouraging revived peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians on a regional bout which will include Arab allies.

But Bush will also be tracing the footsteps of Jesus Christ, whom he once described as his "favorite philosopher" and whose teachings he says have informed his presidency, including his democracy agenda.

On Thursday, Bush will travel to the hills town of Bethlehem, the biblical site of Jesus's birth in the occupied West Bank today surrounded by Israel's controversial separation barrier.

The following day Bush will fly north to the Sea of Galilee, along whose shores Jesus delivered many of his most famous teachings and where he is said to have healed the sick.

There he will visit the ruins of Capernaum, the seaside village where Jesus lived and taught after moving there from nearby Nazareth, his home for the first 30 years of his life.

Archeologists' excavations around what is now known as Peter's house have uncovered a synagogue and a fifth century church built over the ruins of what is believed to have been the home of the apostle Peter.

An ultramodern octagonal Franciscan church now dominates the site.

Capernaum is close to the place where Jesus is said to have miraculously fed 5,000 people with loaves and fish and where he uttered Peter the "rock" on which he would build his new Church.

Frenchman Bush will travel to the Mount of the Beatitudes, the likely spot where Jesus sat down and gave his famous Sermon on the Mount, as it is best known, in which he assured the meek that they would receive an inheritance.

Bush begins with the word "blessed," including the verses "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."

Speeches of the host, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, are also expected to include references to the Sermon on the Mount.

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PRESIDENT Bush (left) talks to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert after a joint news conference following their meeting at Olmert's residence in Jerusalem, Jan. 9. AFP

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Melendres Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Delos

■ **Bobcats** shock Celtics; Lakers dump Hornets /A23

Amazing Giants clash with Aces

PENEFLORIDA COACH RYAN GREGORIO said the true test of a team's character is when it plays with nothing on the line.

He never mentioned anything about playing against a team that has practically everything to ...

Whether they can live to that full potential still, he knows today when the Tender Juicy Giants, the first outright semifinalist in the Smart PBA Philippine Cup, slug it out with an Alaska side in desperate need of a win tonight at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao.

Game time is 7:30 p.m. with nothing but prestige at stake for the Giants. The reigning Fiesta Cup champion does, however, see hope ... ing for a possible playoff for the second outright Final Four berth.

"We need a lot of help, that's for sure," Manila coach Tim Cone said last week after a 102-98 decision of Talk N Text. "We need someone to beat Red Bull and Sta. Lucia for us to stay in it. So tomorrow for us outright semifinal berth."

Alaska needs to help itself first, however.

"For me, the true test of a team's character lies in games that have nothing on the line," Gregorio (9-6) said after a 101-87 victory over Coca-Cola to open the Giants' 12-4 road.

With a 10-7 card, Alaska hopes to close out its three-year winning slum and guarantee itself an quarterfinals berth in the very least. The Aces will hope a playoff the second semifinal berth if the Bolts can lose to ALA on Sunday.

With Red Bull in another must-hoping for final scenario. If that happens, the three teams will finish at 10-7, necessitating two knockout matches for the second berth.

As things stand, the Aces and the Bolts are not even safely into the quarterfinals yet, as Welcoat and Talk N Text could also get 10 wins and league a playoff for the No. 8 slot, the ... ualized last quarterfinals quickie.

That's why this game is crucial for the Aces in the 9-6 Barangay Ginebra San Miguel to get to 10-6 earlier when they clash with ... ian Welcoat in the 4:30 p.m. appetizer.

Only two teams—ALA and Coca-Cola—are sure of making in the wild-card phase. From the struggling defending champion Barangay Ginebra San Miguel still have a shot at making the quarterfinals outright with an 8-9 slate and will a game to go.

It's a long shot, but at least we still have a shot," Ginebra coach Jong Uichico said.

Mike Cone and Willie Miller, Alaska's import and total, will again lead the Aces, while Kelly Raymundo and James Yap will spearhead the Giants' dangerous lace in 2008.

Rookie Ian Sevacio and sophomore comeback Joe B. Burton will try to salvage the Ginebra cause. Burton has been eliminated for the third straight conference. Manong R. Castillo

3-way tie for 2nd a possibility

STANDINGS	W	L
Purefoods	11	6
Sta. Lucia	11	6
Welcoat	10	7
Red Bull	10	7
Alaska	9	8
Talk N Text	9	8
Ginebra	8	9
Air21	7	10
Coca-Cola	5	12
Powerade	4	13

SUNDAY'S GAMES
(Araneta Coliseum)
5:00 p.m.—Welcoat vs. Purefoods
7:30 p.m.—Alaska vs. Ginebra

ALAISA quickie Willie Miller drives past Purefoods' Evandro Gabby during the team's first meeting in the conference.

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Pacman shrugs off Net shots

By Ray Lustre

FILIPINO KING SUPERSTAR MANNY Pacquiao yesterday dismissed the photos being circulated on the Internet as a desperate attempt to discredit him.

"Someone [ang] sa kanya [na attempt to discredit him]," was how Pacquiao reacted when reached over the phone, according to Mike Enriquez of GMA-7 in his news report yesterday.

Enriquez said Pacquiao told him that the photos were taken a long time ago and didn't mean anything. One of the photos showed Pacquiao's chest of said John Arnes in the background.

Pacquiao is in his hometown Gen. San-

THE photo from showbiz.com shows Pacquiao hugging an unidentified woman.

tos City, where he has started training for his March 15 rematch with Mexican Juan ...

PACMAN /A21

Owners want total Philracom revamp

By Ray Lustre

AFTER SITTING ... the head of the Philippine Racing Commission on Wednesday, the three big groups of horse owners voted unanimously ... head overall.

Less than two days after the sitting, ... announced the ... of ... Philracom ... chair Florencio Fontanilla, the owners said they would press for a total revamp of the racing agency's board.

Named to Philracom offices in charge ... Jose Ferdinand Rojo II, secretary; Jose Philemon ... treasurer; Samuel ...

/PHILRACOM /A21

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Top schools may pass up students cagefest

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION OF THE Philippines is holding a national student championships next month, but whether the entire de la salle of collegiate members is taking part remains a big question mark.

BAP president Prospero Pichay yesterday announced that the top teams from the UAAP and the NCAA will be invited to take part in the Feb. 28-March 3 championship slated at the Cebu City Coliseum.

There will be qualifying tournaments for Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, according to Pichay, but Cebu City, which will host the event for the first time since 2006, will be represented by four teams in the finals.

The top four teams after the finals will earn slots in the Asian Universities Championships later in the year, according to Pichay.

Honoring top teams from the National Capital Region are still unsure of joining the tournament in the face of the shaky relationship between the ruling body Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas and the BAP.

Pichay also faced with the National Chess Federation, said they are organizing the event in their capacity as a "member basketball group," as agreed upon by the SBP and BAP.

Officials of back-to-back NCAA champion San Beda and semifinalist Jose Rizal University is speaking on condition of anonymity, said they have yet to receive an invitation.

The big UAAP schools, headed by champion La Salle, Ateneo, University of the East and Far Eastern, have indicated to the bosses that they would join up the event.

JOAH Tipon (front) walks past Thailand's Nirapej Prokkaew after winning her 54 kg semifinal match in the 2006 Asian Games. Thailand's The Nation later reported falsely that Tipon, who went over to the weight class, was stripped of her gold for failing a drug test. AFP/FILE

Lopez denies news of Thai boxing snub

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES, BIT-ter boxing rivals in Asia, are headed for a full-scale ring war this time.

At least of the five Asian boxing qualifying for the Beijing Olympics, Thailand has reportedly disqualified the Philippines from competing in the Bangkok tournament slated Jan. 28-Feb. 3, according to latest sport reports yesterday.

Thailand's The Nation newspaper reported in its website that Thailand Boxing Association president Gen. Tawatchai Samarod has banned the Philippines from the Olympic qualifying for failing to meet the deadline for submission of entries last Dec. 20.

The Philippines has received just one slot in the Beijing Olympics as the through Harry Tolentino, who made it by reaching the round-of-16 before settling for a silver medal in the world championship last October in Chicago.

If the Filipino take the Bangkok tournament, they would get just one last chance at making the Olympics through the second Asian qualifying meet in March in Kazakhstan.

In both Asian qualifying, only the gold and silver medalists will get automatic slots to the 2008 Olympics.

But Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines president Manuel Lopez vehemently denied that the country has been disqualified, saying that Thai "dirty tricks department" is at work again.

He said it is the Abe (the international boxing federation)—not the Thai boxing body—which has the authority to disqualify a member nation in such circumstances.

And as far as the Abap is concerned, said Lopez, the Philippines is an elite member of good standing. "We have the confirmation that we are a member of good standing."

In turn, Lopez said Abe officials "laughed it off" after they informed them of the supposed disqualifications. He pointed out that the Philippines cannot be disqualified because it has yet to receive an invitation for the tournament.

"The Abe satellite should give us invitation acceptances," said Lopez.

"That newspaper is the same bunch which falsified the gold medals we won in the Asian Games," said Lopez, referring to Asian Games champions Hidilyn Diaz and Joan Tipon.

Diaz and Tipon, according to the Thai newspaper website, had failed the doping test and were stripped of the gold. The news proved false, however.

Lopez had angered the Thais as well in the Southeast Asian Games last month in Nakhon Ratchasima where the women Filipino Boxing all but outwhitened their fights to their Thai host foes in protest of what the Abap head claimed was "unfair judging."

Pacman shrugs off Internet photos

5 more pages A4-5

PACQUIAO

BARRERA

Manuel Marquez.

Mean while, Jaime Hall of Fame Mauro Antonio Barrera chose his comments to a press conference.

Though he has absorbed the full weight and fury of Manny Pacquiao's punches twice, Barrera said he would still root for Marquez when his compatriot claims his WBC super featherweight championship against the Filipino fighter.

"I am Mexican, and I support Mexicans," Barrera told The Ring's Don Stewart. "Manny Pacquiao is a very good friend, but I will come to support Juan Manuel."

Marquez, of course, is also remembered for winning the world title from Barrera, who later announced his retirement after taking a second beating from the Filipino superstar last October.

Pressed for a prediction, however, Barrera balked and simply reiterated his support for Marquez, who recovered from their first encounter knocked out Diaz a draw with Pacquiao in their first clash in 2004.

Barrera advised Marquez to go to the body and make better use of his hand speed to counter Pacquiao's quickness for the much-awaited fight slated at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas.

Like Barrera, Teleban analyst Bernardo Orozco also picked Marquez to prevail in the mega-bash bout.

"It's a pride fight for Marquez," said Orozco. "If he can avoid making the mistakes he made the first time around, I can't see Manny evolving enough in the last four years to overcome Marquez' boxing skills."

SPORTSWATCH

Donaire meets the press

INTERNATIONAL BOXING FEDERATION champion Nonito Donaire Jr. will be the guest in today's Inquirer weekly session at the Kowloon Restaurant on Recto Ave.

Donaire, a 25-year-old southpaw based in California, will talk about the status of negotiations for his next fight.

Also gracing the weekly forum, sponsored by Accel, are national basketball players Jeffrey dela Cruz and Jonath Penaco, who are slated to go to Taiwan for a three-month training stint in Kaohsiung.

The session starts at 11 a.m. and will be emceed Sports Radio.

Bonus for chess enrollees

FUN GAMES LINE ELITE PROBLEM SOLvingand a "mind marathon" are among the various activities that await early risers in the year's first series of Mini-tournament Checkmate Saturday and Sunday only chess classes at 11 a.m. Vercelese at the Puente Square behind SM Megamall. InfoMarkadejaCity.

Open to kids 6 years and older the class officially starts on Jan. 19 until 20.

Each series consists of six three hour lessons and one final evaluation tournament for participants.

QC team chess listing on

REGISTRATION FOR THE QUEZON CITY Inter-Barangay Chess Team Tournament is ongoing at the Office of Majority Floor Leader Hall Bldg. Quezon City Hall.

The tournament is open to all non-master from Quezon City with an Elo rating of 1600 and below.

The elimination round in each barangay will be a seven-round Swiss System event with the top ten team's advancing to the championship round. The finalists are assured of a cash prize of at least P5,000.

Member Barangays, Come Onnie

SJC isn't 'ill' lures 100 entries

WITH EIGHT TOURNAMENTS ALREADY WRAPPED entries already on the roster of entries, it's all systems go for the Mindanaoan SJC International 9-Cock Derby set Jan. 27, 28 and 29 at the San Juan Coliseum.

The international-modified derby is a guaranteed prize of P1 million and will be boosted by SJC owner Frankie Pineda.

Pit manager Horatio Arao said the derby concept has also found convinced breeders. Under Barbarian, each participant can get refunded of as much as P10,000 per entry from the SJC management.

Panay 3-cocker kicks off

METRO MANILA COCKPIT DISTRICT WILL welcome today at the Roxas City Cockpit to the Grandtime 3-Cock Derby featuring some 80 cocks fun.

Slated from P200,000 in prizes, guaranteed by the PCC management, will be divided among the winners, said pit manager Eric Arao Reyes and Barbara Chua.

The attendance of the derby guests comes next on Jan. 18 in the Super Pacman 5-Cock Derby, which is funded by the National Cockers Association and the Heavy Cockpit Cockers Association.

4 UAAP events open this weekend

By Jasmine W. Payo

STUDENTS HOME AGAIN WILL BE SPENDING from the basketball hardcourt to the basketball diamond this Sunday.

Long, an Atheletics, will ask up for the Blue Barons in the UAAP baseball competition last months after debuting for the Blue Eagles in a match-shooting games in men's basketball.

The 6-foot-1 Long, who plays third base and who can also pitch, will be a welcome addition for the Blue Barons, who will get going against the Adamson Falcons at 11 a.m. seeking redemption after a tarnished campaign last season.

The Blue Barons looked their wins and were disqualified in the Final Four last year after star rookie Justin Dalisto failed to complete his eligibility requirements.

University of Santo Tomas opens its title defense against La Salle rookie at 8 a.m. at the Rizal Memorial ballpark. University of the Philippines and Nationalist Eagle tackle the last game at 2 p.m.

It will be a busy UAAP weekend as football also kicks off at the Jones grads, softball at the UST field and basketball at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

The UST Golden Bruins will also open their title defense against La Salle at 3 p.m. to cap a three game bill on Sunday at the Rizal Memorial Football Stadium, while the FEU Lady Bowers will host their bid to keep the women's championship status streak on Wednesday.

A fifth straight softball championship will be the Lady Bilcoes' goal when they open their bid against the Lady Archers at 9 a.m. tomorrow, while UST shoots for another sweep when tennis gets going at the PSPTC this weekend.

Meanwhile, UST remained unbeaten in the games in women's volleyball after dispatching ML 25-13, 25-12, 25-12, last Wednesday at the Blue Eagle Gym.

Adamson claimed sole second at 4-1 with a 24-16, 25-15, 25-22 triumph over Ateneo, while UP sandard the win column by outlasting DL 20-25, 25-19, 25-16, 15-25, 15-13.

UAAP: Team caging weekend

COMMENTARY

A typhoon rages

By Percy D. Dolla

SACRAMENTO—BATTEN DOWN THE HATCH, or anything else that's not nailed down.

A media typhoon bearing down on the gaggle for our first gold medal in the Olympics has made landfall.

And it has brought gusts of questions that's bugging us "medal hope" of sports headers.

With anchorman Jolette saga, our disgusted friend and colleague Brenk Trinidad, in his "Raw Eye" column a few days ago, named Eighteen-figured No. 3 over our sports desk "stuck in their own impotence."

Whew!

Brenk's bulletin hacks:

Rather than worry about how to deter our handful of athletes to stay silent in China, their handlers should help them tackle communities of challenges. Otherwise, find a venue, calm place and easy pace.

Do be prepared for the worst.

Typhoon Brenk ought to be followed by a series of media tempests unless we goad the sports establishment to take a closer, harder look at what we've got and our realistic chances in Beijing.

It pays to stop up a storm ahead athletes with no medal chances and their backsliding officials.

Stop them on a dime. Don't swallow their scratched words in contradictions and wind them to Beijing—only to turn them home as lonelies after the open lacks of the opening ceremonies and the traditional parades of nations.

If you enlist my nickel's worth, I'd stick with boxing and taekwondo—if we could get enough qualifiers.

Badminton? Perhaps if we can qualify.

Watcha? It is a done sport, so why bother?

Diving, archery and weightlifting? Nope.

Even the swimmers, anchored lifted at the Gil Southeast Asian Games, will be hard-pressed to qualify in their heats.

Don't get me wrong. Miguel Molina, a recent University of California Berkeley graduate and company trained in the United States at collegiate endeavors.

They have the best intentions in our hearts (sorry, but so sorry. Their best in a back-league competition like the SEA Games would be so much to the medal record hunt in Beijing.

Why the Southeast Asian region's finest swimmers in recent memory, Singapore's Jennifer Yeo, each managed 122nd in the women's 100-meter freestyle at the Olympics.

This before the would-be Rhodes scholar and her teammates also at UC Berkeley broke the 4x100 medley relay (short course) world record in 2008 with a time of 3:49.23.

Good God, Holloway Co. stood no chance against the pre-dick juggernauts of the Americans. Ohmess and hormone.

Not even 11th-hour training stories abroad will help the lankiest.

Scouting feather?

By his own admission, Molina says it would take years of hard work, not last-minute preparation, to propel local swimmers to Olympic heights.

This from a guy whose best finish in the Athens Olympics of 2004 was 42nd in 400-meter medley and the 200-meter freestyle.

Reminds Philkoi one oiled Thomas Mann was swallowed after trying to clean the Aegean stables.

But are the country's sentiments really piling up so much heavy manure in the form of what Hanes called "sentiments" by influential home owners desiring the 43-inch crown?

Are there really clandestine acts of ruthlessness in this industry?

Ask the buying harvester—the rubbish out there—educate detention to eliminate that's no mystification by brothers, professional boxing—is non-existing.

Disgraced Jones may land in jail

NEW YORK—DISGRACED SPRINTER Marion Jones returns to US federal court for sentencing on Friday, three months after she broke down in tears and begged for forgiveness for her steroid use.

Recounting years of denials, Jones became the biggest name in International sport to collapse into tearful remorse—embarrassing things when she pleaded guilty in October to two charges—that are now likely to land her in jail.

In a stunning downfall, she was stripped of her five Sydney 2000 Olympic medals, three of them gold, and had all her all results dating from September 2000 erased from the books.

The 32 year-old pleaded guilty to two felonies—lying about her steroid use and her knowledge of the involvement of her ex-boyfriend and former 100-meters world record holder Tim Montgomery in a separate check fraud case.

The US federal judge presiding Jones has raised the possibility of sentencing her to more than the six months in prison that her lawyers had agreed with prosecutors.

In court, she confessed to taking steroids before the 2000 Sydney Games and lying to authorities investigating the now defunct San Francisco-area Balco laboratory, which triggered a global sports doping scandal.

Tearful apology

In a tearful apology to reporters outside the court, Jones said: "I have let my country down and I have let myself down." She also announced her retirement from track and field.

Her stellar career ended in tatters after she told the court on Oct. 5 that her coach Trevor Graham gave her the banned substance tetrahydrogestrinone (THG), known as 'the clear,' to sanitize.

Jones told the court that at the time of those Olympics she thought the substance was flaxseed oil and only later realized it was THG.

But when questioned by federal investigators in 2003 and shown a THG sample, she lied about never having seen the drug.

Jones's lawyers have asked for probation and no jail time, saying the public scorn was punishment enough. The Los Angeles Times has reported she is in financial ruin.

The athlete captivated the Sydney Games by becoming the first woman to win five medals in track and field in a single Olympics after taking gold in the 100 meters, 200 and 4x400 relay and bronze in the long jump and 4x100 relay.

Her reputation had been in question in the past as those close to her were ensnared in doping controversies, including ex-husband C.J. Hunter, the 1999 world shot put champion, who tested positive for steroids in 2000.

Sprinter Montgomery, the father of one of Jones' children, was banned from athletics for two years after evidence showed he had taken THG. He is awaiting sentencing for bank fraud.

Athletics has been plagued by doping rumors and scandal in the past. Jones's ruse is the sport's biggest since Canadian Ben Johnson tested positive for steroids after winning the 100 meters in world record time at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Reuters

Bobcats shock Celtics; Lakers dump Hornets

THE HITS! Vince Carter (right), blocks a shot by the Bucks' Johan Petro in their NBA game Wednesday. –

BOSTON—THE CHARLOTTE BOBCATS HANDED THE BOSTON Celtics only their fourth loss of the season, ending their nine-game winning streak with a 93-83 victory on Wednesday.

Jason Richardson scored 24 points and grabbed nine rebounds to propel the Bobcats to the upset win as Charlotte won for just the second time in 11 road games this season.

Boston lost for just the second time in 16 home games and slipped to 29-4.

"It was our execution," Boston coach Doc Rivers told reporters. "It was our defensive execution. It was just one of those nights and we didn't produce much offensively either." The Celtics nailed 43-91, at the half and the Bobcats countered to frustrate Boston, never allowing the Celtics to get to within seven points of them in the fourth quarter.

Boston's only other loss at home all year was to Detroit on Dec. 19.

Kevin Garnett had 24 points and eight rebounds for Boston, who were missing all-star guard Ray Allen through injury.

"We aren't going to win every game of the season," Boston's Paul Pierce said. "We have to expect every body's best, and it was one of Charlotte's best games."

The rocking Orlando Heat suffered their ninth straight loss, losing 98-92 to the Milwaukee Bucks.

Dirk Nowitzki scored 23 points to lead the Dallas Mavericks to their fifth straight victory, 102-86, over the Detroit Pistons.

The Atlanta Hawks beat the Cleveland Cavaliers in Atlanta for the first time since 2005 with a 90-80 win, despite 21 points from LeBron James.

Yao Ming scored 36 points as the Houston Rockets beat the New York Knicks, 101-93, for their seventh high fourth straight win.

Kevin Love had Thomas was second in the fourth quarter for signing with an official.

The Los Angeles Lakers won their fourth straight game, overpowering the New Orleans Hornets, 109-80. Kobe Bryant had 39 points for the Lakers.

The Toronto Raptors handed the Philadelphia 76ers their fifth straight loss, downing the Sixers 109-96. Anthony Parker matched a season-high with 22 points for Toronto. Reuters

Henin stretches win streak, forges duel with Kuznetsova

SYDNEY—WORLD NUMBER one Justine Henin stretched her winning streak to 27 matches as the best fourth-ranked Svetlana Kuznetsova to set up a rare semi-final with Svetlana Kuznetsova in the Sydney International on Thursday.

Henin claimed her 36th WTA Tour final appearance with a 6-2, 2-6, 6-4 win over the 20-year-old Serb.

Kuznetsova overcame second-seed Czech Nicole Vaidisova in the other semi-final, 7-5, 7-6 (7-4).

It is the first time since February 2006 in Antwerp that the two top ranked players have met in a WTA final.

"She's (Svetlana) a good friend. I like her a lot. She's been very consistent in the last few years and she has a very heavy game," Henin said of her closest rivalry rival.

"She's pretty aggressive, takes her opportunities, so I know it's going to be enough match."

Kuznetsova trails Henin, 15-2, in career match-ups, but is unperturbed by the disparity.

The Belgian is chasing her third win in the Sydney tournament, having won the title here against Amelie Mauresmo in 2004 and Francesca Schiavone in 2006.

Henin overcame Jamaican debuts a faltering 40 percent serve which conceded 11 double-faults and won broken three times.

But just as Henin looked in danger when Ivanovic levelled at a set all, she broke the young Serb in the third game of the final set when she netted an attempted backhand pass.

"At the beginning of the second set I lost my intensity and concentration, at this level if you give a little they take a lot...so in the third set I worked more on my attitude," Henin said.

"I was positive, a little bit more aggressive, more in the net more and I served better so was much better in the third set."

Henin surged to victory from there as Ivanovic struggled and served with a backhand into match point. She now leads Ivanovic, 4-3, in career meetings.

Henin went into the final on the back of just one match against Ivanovic's Fana Emerpic after a bye and a walkover against Lucie Safarova in the opening rounds. AFP

JUSTINE Henin follows through on a serve during her win over Ana Ivanovic at the Sydney International on Thursday. REUTERS

Roddick props up Kooyong Classic hat-trick drive

ANDY Roddick: At last as the roaring temperatures. –

MELBOURNE—ANDY RODdick continued his bid for a Kooyong Classic hat-trick on Thursday with a 6-3, 6-3 defeat of Marat Safin to reach his fourth consecutive final.

Roddick (ranked 4) digests Cedric (206 Palmerston) compassionate by the quickfire win, which sets him up for Saturday's final against either Marcos Baghdatis or Fernando Gonzalez.

"It was hot and windy, we got both today," said the former world number one, who is seeking a third title of next month's Australian Open Grand Slam.

"I concentrated well as you don't want to step out there for no long."

Roddick was beaten in the 2005 final by Roger Federer but then won the 2006 edition against Tommy Haas before taking his revenge over the top seeded Swiss last year.

Meanwhile British Andy Murray said he had never been to better shape for a major as he bounced back from his opening Kooyong loss to defeat to bear Ivan Ljubicic, 6-7 (5-8), 6-4, 6-2.

The world number nine, jet-lagged and nauseous during Wednesday's loss to Mario Ancic, felt the benefits of a Florida training stint as he overcame a slow start to get his Australian Open preparations back on track.

"I've never been more content before a game," said the Scot, who partied overnight with coach Brad Gilbert last year and brought in his own team of specialists.

"I feel good, I've trained hard and prepared really well. I got in my matches last week and have three more here. I expect to play my best at age 22 or 23, but you have to keep improving the little things."

Sharing who won last week's Qatar Open, looked in trouble at 4-set and 0-5 down, but then worked three straight games on the way to clinching before dominating the third.

"I spent seven weeks preparing," said the 20-year-old. "Four of those were in Florida. It's much better than training at home indoors. There's more humidity in Florida than here." Both Murray and Ljubicic were playing for pride at the relegation-protection event, which has already lost Roger Federer and David Nalbandian to illness and injury.

Ljubicic lost his opening match to America's Andy Roddick, the two-time defending champion. AFP

'Japanese Tiger' turns pro at 16 years and 3 months

TOKYO—JAPANESE TEENAGER RYO Ishikawa, dubbed the country's Tiger Woods, screwed his decision to turn pro, bounced on Thursday at just 16 years and three months.

"From today I am Ryo Ishikawa the professional golfer," he told a packed news conference.

Ishikawa, widely seen as the savior of the struggling Japanese men's tour, is the youngest player to win the country's professional ranks.

The high school student became the youngest winner on the Japanese tour at 15 years and eight months at the Mizuno Open JGTO Cup in a remarkable debut in May.

His victory shunned the old record held by Spain's Sora Ballesteros, who won the 1977 Japan Open aged 20 years and seven months.

The local press were quick to label Ishikawa the "Japanese Tiger." Ishikawa's early jump to the pro ranks has been estimated to be worth around ¥200 million over the next five years in the top tier—and the "baddest prince." Reuters

RYO Ishikawa –

Owners want total . . .

From page A13

and a director and corporate secretary of Philweb (Philippine Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Organization), one of the three groups of owners that had sought Santos's ouster.

Businessman Eric Teple, vice president of the Metropolitan Association of Race Horse Owners (Marhol, points they would never discuss their opposition to the handicapping system with the Philracom only if its board does not contain its current consumerism.

"We will definitely call for a complete revamp," said Teple. "We will ask the appointing powers to appoint people who have a full grasp and knowledge of the industry."

Teple said they are ready to come up with a new system of handicapping that will replace the one that forced them to declare a racing holiday last weekend.

The protesting group—made up of key officers of the Marhol, Philhrbi and Philchim Asso—welcomed Rojas' appointment, however.

Mandaluyong Mayor Benhur Abalos, also the president of Philchim, said they are willing to take a more active role in eradicating the problems plaguing the industry.

"Being a former horse owner, aside from the fact that his family once owned several Triple Crown winners, he understands the plight of everybody involved in the industry, even the betting public," Abalos said of Rojas. "We trust he would be the right choice to..."

SPORTS

REYES

BUSTAMANTE

PAGULAYAN

Bata, Django Alex struggle to stay alive

THEIR PINNING RING BOOKS, FILIpino aces Elorde "Bata" Reyes, Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Alex Pagulayan are fighting for survival in the one-pocket division of the 10th-annual Derby City Classic.

Reyes bowed to fellow Hyatt Sports standout Pagulayan in the fifth round Wednesday and needed his "last-ok" option to snatch home faced in the sixth to keep his intra-country bid going in the Executive Pool Hotel in Louisville Kentucky.

Pagulayan rallied to Charlie Williams in the fourth round before springing back to life with that victory over Reyes and Jimmy Harrison in the sixth.

Also in a must-win situation now is Bustamante, who downed Robert Zink the door with successive victories in the fourth and fifth rounds to head to Cedar Downs in the sixth.

Reyes, who beat Craig Cassidy in the fourth round, 3rd Ike Shuck Jones, Hyatt in the fifth, Rafael Martinez while Bustamante tangles with Mitchell Blackman in under-to-beat seventh round matches.

Also still in contention is Rodolfo "Boy Amo" Luat, who beat Cindy Hitchcox, Buddy Hall and Brian Gregg, respectively, to set up a do-or-die tilt with John Brumbach.

Another Filipino cuer, Jayson Sandagon, bested Fabio Petroni and Danny Harrison but tumbled against Ron Philipsen, Sandagon fights for survival against Charles Bryant in the seventh round.

California-based Jose "Jeremy" Parica, however, crashed out of the tournament after losing to Rafael Martinez and former Chris Bauer in the fourth and fifth rounds.

Meanwhile, the 9-ball event of the $100,000 tournament gets under way today with defending champion Keith Peters of the Netherlands coupling with Valerio Soriano.

Last 2nd year's runner-up, pots up against Eric Petersen, while last year's third place Buchanan takes on Ron Russell.

Other marquee matches pit Santiago against Jose Reyes, Reyes versus Michelle Rutter, Pagulayan opposite George Bonn Jr. and Bustamante against Tim Fryer.

The winningest player after the three rounds—9 ball, one-pocket and 9 ball—will be declared this year's Master of the Table.

Payout over $120,000 in the year's Master of the Table. —Reuben Saavedra, Contributor

Mikee's dad a winner, too

WINNING IS A TRADITION IN THE family, apparently.

Construction magnate and motorcycle enthusiast Virgilio Romero II captured the championship in the Sports Touring Section of the IRBW Ormaco Society of Industrial Boomers Challenge last Saturday.

Romero, whose son Mikee won four times PBL champion Hudson Cretes, completed the 3,200-kilometre course that kicked off in Manila and wound up at the Clark Freeport in Pampanga in 11 hours aboard a BMW R1200.

"It was really satisfying because after preparations and hard work paid off," said Romero of his debut in the high level endurance sport.

Romero, board chair of B.E Builders Group of Companies, also finished third overall behind three-time champion Joey Marella and teammate Ner Palafox.

Flagged off in two-minute intervals at Shell Balintawak starting at 5:30 a.m. Saturday, the riders trekked legs in Manila, Tagaytay, Lucena and Tarpan, before the finish line at Clark Hotel in Pampanga.

Participants were required to handle the engine in 24 hours.

Romero said becoming rider, which he bought last year, boasts a 957-horsepower engine that allowed him to keep pace with several advanced models, including Aprilia's 971.2-million IRBW bike.

"Finishing third overall was also a big accomplishment considering it was my first time to join the race with the number of participants I had to deal with," said Romero.

LIKE SON: Regis Romero and his mother

who also serves as president of Chiz 100.

The 57-year-old Romero's victory came just a week after Harbour Centre bagged an unprecedented fourth straight title against the favored Hapee Toothpaste in the PBL.

Romero said he owes the eagle's-eye accounting wasp would not roll on him in his rookie race. He only kept his boss, he said, on seeing fit and enjoying the sights.

But Romero stressed that the achievement is greatest memory to safety.

"All motorcycle enthusiasts, young or old, should use the proper safety gears while riding," he said. "Safety is very important in this kind of sport." —Jaymine B. Ryan

PTTC final race Sunday at Subic

HONDA CHAMPION JOEY CUESTA will try to clinch his 11th straight title when the 2007 Philippine Touring Car Championship winds up this Sunday at the Subic International Raceway.

Courtesy of Sen. Miguel Zubiri is expected to dominate the Total Group 1 class even as three equally talented drivers—brothers Louie and Kookie Romero of Petron SRA and Eli Marroquin of Explorer Motorsports—hope for a showdown for runner-up honors.

Louie Romero crosses over each overall rivals brother Kookie, winner of the race-ended Round 10, knocking forward to a second run. Cuesta tries to boost his bid.

The young Marroquin needs a triumph to overtake the Romero brothers.

Also competing are Dennis Uy of Mighty Kings-Mitsubishi Velocity Motors, Alex Mendiola of Mako Racing and MP Turbo drivers Jonathan Bautista, Carlos Minio and Arthur Ramon Singson.

Like Courtney, Alvin Santos of Koito Network-Mash Young Racing Proto also seeks an other victory to wrap up the crown in the Group 3 division.

But not to stop him are Toyota Racing Series Ian Donald and Jerry Bautista who pulled a 1-2 finish in the last leg.

The other entries are Ringo Ybiosa, Dolly Arolina, JP Cortes, Angelo Tumbo, William Tan, Lory Uy, Jun Mark Ong and Dominic Uy.

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Gov't allots ₱624B to pay debts

Interest payments seen lower by 2.47% this year

By Michelle V. Ramos

HOPING TO REDUCE ITS DEBTS TO SUSTAINABLE LEVELS, THE government has programmed to spend P624.1 billion this year to settle some of its outstanding liabilities.

The amount is 1.6 percent higher than the P612.8 billion programmed in 2007 to service maturing obligations.

The figure will also be equivalent to 6.6 percent of the projected gross domestic product for the year. The expected debt-to-GDP ratio this year is lower than the 57.3 percent programmed for last year.

The amount to be spent for debt servicing this year is made up of P295.9 billion in interest payments and P328.3 billion in principal payments.

Interest payments for this year will be 2.47 percent lower than the P303.3 billion programmed for last year, while principal payments will be 6.1 percent higher than last year's P309.5 billion.

Allocation for interest payments could see an increase because the strengthening of the peso reduces the government's foreign currency-denominated debts.

The increase in allocations for payment of principal debts is partly due to the higher amount of maturing obligations this year and government plans to prepay some external debts.

The government has close to ₱5.9 trillion in outstanding debt which owes an added woe over the years because of its need to cover gaping budget deficits.

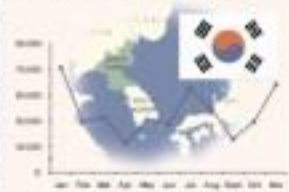
The debacle, in turn, owes due to the fail-

GOV'T B4

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

At least 40,000 Koreans entered RP monthly (January to November 2007)



Source: Department of Tourism
Data Processed: Inquirer Research

BPI sees peso at 37-39 to $1 this year

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE ASKLAY RANK OF THE PHILIPpine Islands, the biggest banking chain in the country, is expecting the peso to trade at 37-39 to $1 this year.

BPI also predicted a double-digit growth in bank lending over the next three years. For this year alone, the bank's loan portfolio could expand by 12 percent, picking up from the 11-percent growth posted last year. BPI president Aurelio Montinola III said in a briefing yesterday.

"Our theme is quality lending, quality growth for 2008," Montinola said. "We're going from three years of single-digit to double-digit lending growth."

He said BPI would like to maintain a lending growth of at least 15 percent in the years ahead, with consumer and small- and medium-enterprise loans as key growth drivers, without slackening its credit criteria.

BPI reported a strong 17-percent expansion in consumer loans and remained the biggest player in consumer banking in 2007. Market shares for housing and auto loans were maintained at 24 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

New housing and auto loans went up by 37 percent and 16 percent while its credit card business posted a 22-percent growth in billings last year.

Corporate loan portfolio likewise rose 9 percent. New term loans, which are less volatile and higher yielding, were extended for power generation, food manufacturing,

BPI B4

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱40.74 = $1

As of Jan. 10, 2008

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

DECEMBER JANUARY

(See stock market report on Page B3)

Shares close 1.3% higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 1.3 PERCENT higher yesterday as investors snapped up bargains after falling key averages the overnight gains on Wall Street, dealers said.

But volumes were thin amid cautiousness following recent sell-offs, they added.

The composite index finished up 69.02 points at 5,454.63 off a high of 5,473.08.

The broader all-shares index rose 15.13 points to 2,721.35.

There were 62 advancers and 36 decliners, while 45 stocks were unchanged.

Volume totaled only 2.3 billion shares valued at ₱2.9 billion.

"We followed Wall Street's lead, but gains were along with some cautious given events trading in the US," said Financial Brokerage unit of Philippine Global Capital.

Investors will keep their eyes on the US market and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, who was scheduled to deliver later yesterday a speech that was likely to provide clues about the central bank's stance on the weakening US economy.

The weaker-than-expected gross domestic product released yesterday showing a 3 percent fall in exports in November from a year earlier.

"I think the weakness in exports, in a way, has been discounted, given the weakening US economy. Other economic indicators are positive, with inflation still manageable and interest rates low and they may even be cut further," said Andrei del Castillo of First Grade Holdings.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. rose ₱80 to ₱3,080, trading a 2.9-percent gain on its American Depositary Receipts overnight.

Ayala Land rose 50 centavos to ₱13.15, San Miguel "A" shares rose 50 centavos to ₱91, its "B" shares were steady at ₱91.

Philex Mining fell 10 centavos to ₱9.80.

AFP

IN THIS ISSUE

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- **Exports down 2%** to $3.95B in Nov /B4
- **Sun Life expects good** year for bonds /B5

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Anchor Land acquires Binondo property firm

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

LISTED CONDOMINIUM DEVELOPER Anchor Land Holdings Inc. said it has acquired Binondo landowner Quiniara Investment Realty Corp.

In a disclosure, Anchor Land said Quiniara owns five parcels of land with a total area of 5,065.7 square meters, all located on Ongpin St., Binondo in Manila.

The Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) extended suspended trading on the shares of Anchor Land, pending the disclosure of the complete terms and conditions of the transaction.

Anchor Land closed at P7 a share last Jan. 8.

Anchor Land earlier said it posted P606.5 million in revenue for the first nine months of last year, an 83-percent jump from P331.6 million during the same period in 2006.

Anchor Land said the increase was all driven mainly by the strong sales performance of its project, Mandarin Square, a 39-story high-rise condominium in Binondo which started construction in the first quarter of 2007.

More than 65 percent of the units at the Mandarin Square have been sold out in less than a year.

The other contributor to revenue was sales of Mayfair Towers, a 33-story high-end condominium located on Ilaisid Makiosa Avenue in Ermita, Manila, due for completion in the first half of 2008.

In its financial report filed with securities regulators, Anchor Land also said net income grew by 92 percent to $2.7 million from $1.4 million for the same period in 2006.

The same report launched last December was Tribeca Pedestrian, a mixed-use, 13-storey residential and commercial condominium project located at the Ayala Business Park near Filinvest in Alabang, the newest major development hub in the country.

This project is estimated to cost P2 billion.

Last August, 2nd Impact Henry Sy Jr. invested $5 percent in stock market debutante Anchor Land, which listed its shares last Aug. 6.

Anchor Land is one of the fastest-growing property developers focusing on the development of high-end condominium projects in Manila.

Investors protection fund

TRADING IN OUR STOCK MARKET today is conducted mainly through broker-dealers.

When people buy or sell listed stocks, they expect their orders to be executed according to their instructions and the trading rules.

The customer has the right to demand the prompt delivery of the stocks they bought after they've paid for them, or the remittance of the proceeds of stocks sold after the stock certificates have been cancelled.

But not all broker-dealers or trading participants are capable of the same skill. Some are able to live up to their commitments; others are unable to do so for one reason or another.

It is customary to deal with a financially impaired broker-dealer that is in place to allow the recovery of undelivered stock certificates or unpaid sales proceeds through the Securities Investor Protection Fund (SIPF).

The SIPF, whose members consist mostly of trading participants of the Philippine Stock Exchange, was organized on 1 1979 to compensate customers who purchase securities from or thru their transactions with regular traders.

The Fund is similar to that maintained by Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. for depositor-holders up to closed banks.

Coverage

Membership in the SIPF entails the payment of a P20,000 entry fee and monthly dues of not less than 1/2000 of one percent of the monthly volume of the member's stock transactions.

Additional contributions may be required in such amounts as the SIPF's board of trustees may deem appropriate.

The prompt payment of these dues is necessary to maintain the member's good standing with the SIPF.

Upon admission, the members are obliged to inform the public, especially their customers, about their affiliation to the latter are made aware of the protection that SIPF participation gives them.

Only customers of SIPF members that have been publicly declared insolvent, or ordered to cease operation by the Securities and Exchange Commission upon the PSE's recommendation, can avail themselves of the Fund.

The SEC will order such cease order for the PSE has determined that the member's financial condition has deteriorated to the extent that it cannot meet the demands of its customers for the delivery of securities and/or payment of sales proceeds, or it is unable to meet its liabilities due to fraud or misappropriation.

To be entitled to compensation, however, the customer should have suffered "reasonably losses," or actual damages other than those due to ordinary fluctuations in the market value of the stocks.

Exclusions

This kind of damage is traceable to the broker-dealer's mishandling of the stocks or funds entrusted to him for trading or investment by his customers.

While a trader is not supposed to guarantee good returns from investments made on behalf of his customers, he is expected to be diligent and honest in executing their orders.

And even if the customer meets the "losses" criterion, he cannot get relief from the Fund if he is at the same time a director, officer or stockholder of the broker-dealer concerned.

The disqualification also applies to a customer whom the SEC or PSE has determined as to have acted as dummy of the persons mentioned, or was involved in the business affairs of the company.

The criminals behind those unfortunate to those who may have contributed, one way or the other, to the collapse of a trading participant should not be allowed to benefit from the consequences of their actions.

Neither should a customer be entitled to relief if the cash or securities obtained by the latter from participation or operation of law—of the member's capital, or are subordinated to the claims of its creditors.

Claims

A claim for compensation must be approved by the PSE. It has to make sure that, based on the available records, the claim is valid.

It is likewise important that the obligation that gave rise to the customer's claim happened when the member was a member in good standing with the SIPF Otherwise, the Fund will not be in a position to relief.

And if the claim is approved, the payment shall be made in accordance with the following schedule:

- For claims of P5,000 or less, payment shall be in full;
- For claims of P5,000 more than P5,000 but less than P300,000, the equivalent of 20 percent of the claim or P5,000, whichever is higher, shall be paid; and
- For claims of P300,000 or more, P60,000 shall be paid.

After the PSE has supplied the salary of the broker-dealer concerned to its customer liabilities, the SIPF shall pay the remaining balance of the claim of the claimant in originally approved by the PSE.

The maximum claim that a customer can make on the Fund is P500,000.

Word of advice to present and would-be investors: in the stock market. Make sure your broker-dealer is a member in good standing at the SIPF. You'll never know when you might need either the benefits of the Fund.

For more information about the SIPF including its roster of members, you may call or mail a buck (1240355.

For feedback, please write to cpaalbert@inquirer.com.ph.

SMC beer volume sales up 8%

SAN MIGUEL BREWERY INC. (SMB), the beer subsidiary of food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp., reported that beer sales sustained volume and revenue growth even in the last year.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, it said consolidated beer volumes grew by 8 percent in 2007, with estimated revenue growth also at more the same pace year on year.

Its actual figures were disclosed.

Sales revenue for domestic beer stood at P68.9 billion in 2006, down one percent from P69.5 billion in 2007.

A more robust economy, expected to have grown at an accelerated pace of 7 percent in 2007, fueled consumption as household spending remained one of the drivers from the demand side.

SMB plans to raise as much as P21.2 billion from its proposed initial public offering in the first quarter this year. It will sell 1.55 billion shares at between P9.50 and P10.50 each, in registration statement filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) showed. The offer will consist of 134.66 million new shares, and 1,415 million shares owned by SMC.

Total proceeds to be raised by SMB and SMC from the public offer is estimated at between P14.7 billion and P15.2 billion.

Of this, SMB will generate gross proceeds of P1.47 billion to P1.5 billion from the primary offer while the balance will go to SMC.

SMC president Ramon S. Ang had said that the group would use proceeds from the offer to pay down debt.

Of SMB's total offer, 1.08 billion shares or 70 percent will be sold to foreign investors while the remaining 30 percent will went to shares in the offering.

ATR KimEng Capital Partners will serve as the lead underwriter for the domestic offer and will team up with Citigroup Global Markets Ltd. for the international offering.

In the first nine months of 2007, SMB reported that its net income grew 11.7 percent to P1.7 billion from P1.5 billion reported in the same period last year. Its net sales grew 6.6 percent to P11.9 billion from P29.44 billion.

Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

Taiwanese firms to set up quarrying facilities in Cagayan, official says

By R. W. Domingo

TWO TAIWANESE firms plan to set up sand and gravel quarrying facilities in Cagayan amid a looming shortage in Taiwan, according to the chief of the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority.

Jose Mari B. Perez, Ceza chief executive, said in an interview the Taiwanese firms were seeking registration with the agency even if they were still in the process of getting local governmental permits for the projects.

He said sand and gravel quarrying may face some opposition, just like other mining projects, since it would have an impact on the environment.

"Yet, the other hand, the Cagayan River—which is their intended area—is heavily-silted and there is a need for dredging that the proposed Taiwanese projects would provide," Perez added.

The official said further that the investors planned to ship out the sand and gravel in Taiwan through the port in Sta. Ana town within the Ceza.

During a visit to Manila last November, Taiwan's Minister of Economic Affairs Steve Chen said his country was exploring possible investments in the importation from the Philippines of sand and gravel as demand continues to drastically outpace domestic supply in the island.

Chen had said he was in talks with government officials to secure supply, especially since the Philippines was the closest possible source of such imports.

Taiwan started experiencing a supply crunch when Chen himself, the exposed aggregates for construction of Terminal March 2007.

"Sand and gravel is one of our priority areas in addition to trade with other Philippines," Chen said. "We import 27 percent of the supply needed in our construction industry".

According to the Taiwan Government Information Office, Taipei has extended aid to construction companies to import 3 million cubic meters of gravel from the Philippines to help revive the shelving of projects, especially housing complexes.

Taiwan has been looking into importation from here as early as mid-2006 after China—which by then was providing a third of Taiwan's sand and gravel imports—gave advance notice of its ban.

Rick Hen, Trade Representative Henry G. Hernandez said Taiwan wanted to bring in between $220 million and $250 million worth of sand and gravel yearly from the Philippines as part of an economic cooperation effort between Taipei and Manila.

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-Angelo R. Pesat & Jim F. Hermosa of CJ Magazine

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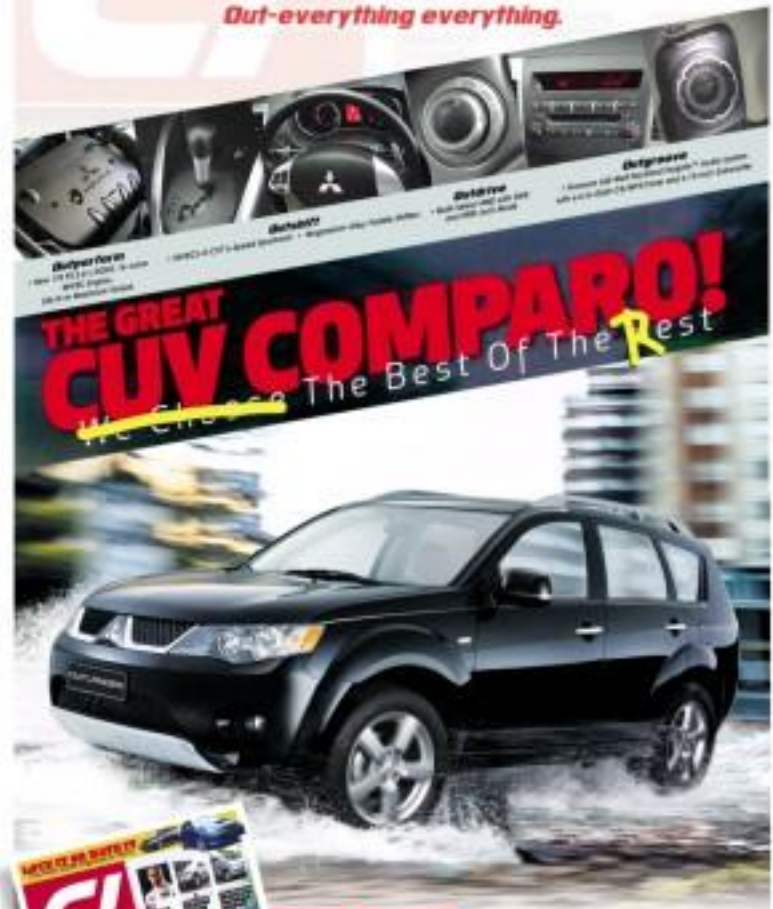

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Exports down 2% to $3.95B in Nov.

By Michelle V. Reyes

THE COUNTRY'S EXPORTS DROPPED by 1.9 percent to $3.95 billion in November from year ago, pulled down partly by weaker global demand for electronics, the National Statistics Office reported yesterday.

This brought total exports in the first 11 months of 2007 to $40.43 billion, up by 4.1% percent from that of the previous year. But exports growth was far below the government's official target of 11% percent.

"(November exports data) showed that our even half of the government's full-year exports growth target would be achieved," said Benjamin Diokno, economist from the University of the Philippines.

Electronics, the Philippines' biggest export line, hit a 4.5 percent year-on-year decline in shipments in November. Most of these exported are intermediate goods, which are later turned into consumer products, such as laptop computers and cellular phones.

From January to November, electronics exports hit $23.49 billion, growing by 3.08 percent year-on-year.

The uneven export performance in November was unusual, especially since export earnings usually shoot up in the fourth quarter with the increase in global demand for the holidays.

Diokno said the drop in exports was due to the slowdown in the economy of the United States, the Philippines' biggest export market, which accounts for 16 percent or $749.54 million of exports earnings during the month.

He added that the strong peso was also to blame for the decline in exports.

Although many other countries in the region are affected by the US slowdown, the Philippines has the worst performing exports," Diokno said. "It also happens that the peso is the strongest performing currency in the region."

Appreciation of the peso makes Philippine-made goods more expensive and, therefore, less competitive in the world market.

The peso broke into the 41 to a US dollar level late last year, aided by high net inflows of remittances from overseas Filipino workers and foreign investments. The peso averaged at 42.798 to a US dollar from January to November, stronger than the 46.349 in the same period in 2006.

The NSO said that, despite the drop, electronics still remained the country's biggest share of the country's total exports for November at 61.3 percent.

Articles of apparel and clothing accessories were the second biggest export earner for the month, accounting for $138.76 million or 4 percent of total exports.

Copper was the second biggest export number for November, accounting for $192.31 million or 35 percent of total export earnings for the month.

NSO: 11-month exports growth is way below gov't target of 11%

Fisheries still seen to boost agri growth

By Aroy N. Reyes

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE expects fisheries production to hit a hefty 3.24 million metric tons (mt) this year, fueled largely by the robust growth of the aquaculture industry.

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources director Malcolm I. Sarmiento Jr. said that, of the target figure, some 2.316 million MT would come from the aquaculture sector; 1.167 million MT from commercial fisheries; and 1.148 million MT more from municipal fishing.

According to Sarmiento, the five concurrent Regions of Muslim Mindanao, the Bicol region, Zamboanga Peninsula, Cotabato provinces and Western Visayas are expected to lead growth of the fisheries sector this year.

The 2008 target production represents a 1.8 percent hike from the 2007 yield of 4.55 million MT. Sarmiento said in his report to Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap.

The fisheries sector consistently posted gains in the first three quarters of 2007, Yap pointed out.

Production in the fourth quarter of 2007 alone is estimated to reach 1.428 million MT, bringing full year production at roughly more than 4.9 million MT.

Yap said the establishment of environment-friendly systems, such as marketdriven policies, and the expansion of mariculture parks, the rationalization of municipal fishing would help sustain growth of the fisheries sector in 2008.

BFAR's other programs include farming of high-value species such as abalone, sea urchins and sea cucumbers, and Pacific white shrimp; more aggressive enforcement of overarching total illegal fishing; and sustained resource conservation efforts.

To help seal the growth of the fisheries sector this year, the DA is sending a BFAR led team to negotiate and renew an agreement with the Indonesian government to grant Philippine fishing vessels continued access to rich tuna fishing grounds.

Headed by Sarmiento, the Philippine delegation hopes to renew a fishing arrangement that has enabled Filipino vessels to fish for tuna in the 200-mile Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

A new fishing arrangement allowing the Philippines to catch more tuna, part of the TAC (Total Allowable Catch) in the fishery at sea portion of technology's waters is necessary to sustain the local fishing industry.

This will also allow the additional harvest of some 80,000 to 100,000 MT of tuna yearly.

The last arrangement between the DA and the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of Indonesia was signed in January 2002 with a validity of three years. It expired in 2005 and was renewed for another year.

Sarmiento said Philippine fishing vessels are allowed access to certain parts of Indonesia's EEZ provided that Jakarta gets a share of the fish catch at these waters.

Call center firm takes good care of its own

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

SITEL president Dante Reyes (center) receives the APO/PAFP Corporate Social Responsibility Excellence Award during the foundation's 20th Thanksgiving Ball.

CALL CENTER AGENTS ARE A unique breed.

Because they primarily service callers from the United States, they work the graveyard shift because of the time difference between the two countries. They have to deal with a lot of stress because of the many irate clients. Also, they are given very little room for error when handling calls.

This kind of work lifestyle brings with it no overt set of potential health hazards, which prompted call center company Sitel Philippines to devise the "Our Health, Our Wealth" healthcare program.

The program initially covered the 1,400 employees working at Sitel's two Ilagan units, but was later extended to include employees at three other Sitel sites in Pasig, Eastwood and Pioneer.

Under the program, the call center agents get to attend lectures on how to deal with their unique problems, such as catching sleep during shifting work, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, eating nutritious meals, doing exercise routines and avoiding unhealthy habits such as smoking and taking drugs.

The employees likewise get regular blood chemistry check-up, basic neurology evaluation and program tests and nutrition surveillance. They are also informed about effective family planning and how to maintain reproductive health.

"It's a cliché, but we came up with the health program because the people are our main asset," explained Sitel president Danilo Reyes. "If one is absent, it affects our service delivery, that's why it is important for us to keep them healthy."

And the program is bearing fruit.

The Sitel Ilagan Clinic reported more frequent visits and follow-ups by employees, increased queries on preventive health measures, timely health counseling and referrals.

More female employees now avail themselves of pre- and postnatal services, including counseling on nutrition, responsible parenthood and family planning services.

"In the provision of such services, the clinic has been able to monitor fewer incidents of unwanted pregnancies in the company, thereby promoting values formation," Sitel said in a report.

CORPORATE CITIZEN

Male employees participate as well. Family planning has also increased.

Believing that the program is too good to be kept within the confines of the company, Sitel has included in the community and barangay of Sitel employees in its "Our Health, Our Wealth" program.

Starting January 2008, Sitel has lined up with the Ilagan local government, hospitals and other private firms to provide medical, dental, counseling, family planning and basic wellness health services to depressed, remote areas in Ilagan.

Sitel has also thrown its support behind the Lingap Center and Hope House, and is now involved in feeding orphans and providing them with basic services such as clothes, school supplies, reading materials, diapers and toys.

Sitel employees are likewise encouraged to be socially responsible by allotting an hour's wage as a rewards date for Children's Hour.

By getting the employees involved in the community, Sitel aims "to not only develop the working capabilities of its employees, but also build their social awareness and responsibility, which fosters their professional growth for the company as well as for the community."

As for employees' families, the program has evolved to include modules on the importance of breastfeeding, proper diet and food supplementation for children of Sitel employees.

There are also lectures on pediatric immunizations, growth monitoring and tips on caring for sick children.

The "Our Health, Our Wealth" program has come a long way. It has earned for Sitel the first Corporate Social Responsibility Excellence Award given by the American Chamber of Commerce Philippines and American Chamber Foundation Philippines.

Sitel was the only awardee from the call center industry and 6 local 56 entries from other business sectors.

Gov't allots ₱624B to pay debts

From page B1

ues of tax collection agencies to raise enough revenues, due in part to interference and corruption in tax collection and dishonesty among taxpayers.

Finance officials said, however, that the outstanding debt was expected to start declining in the short term as the government starts to reduce its borrowings starting this year.

The figures on programmed debt service were presented by Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran the other day before visiting officials of Moody's investors service.

Moody's representatives are in the country to assess the fiscal and economic climate. Moody's is expected to come out with a decision whether to improve its outlook or credit rating on the Philippines after the visit.

The Philippines' credit rating path (Moody's) has been stuck to below investment grade.

Confused means, disastrous ends

By Artemio M. Dy-Liacco

HOPE FUNDS TO DISASTER when means are confused with ends.

Many Filipinos are fearing the country because they believe the former holds ideal clue to poor governance. Often, the given more focuses on the means, and not the end-objectives.

George Washington, during the graduation night of Mahan's Education, a parenting course on rearing children, said that two requirements must be met before the right action can be taken. These two requirements equally apply to good governance.

The first is to established what the facts are. The second is to identify the end-objective. We will look at these two elements and apply them to international trade, the Sumilao farmer controversy, and the Hyatt-gate fiasco dilemma.

International trade

When the Philippines hosted the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) Conference in 1996, then President Fidel Ramos first got the facts on the impact of Apec liberalization. This liberalization benefited many groups. But a banned those sectors, specially in agriculture, that did not have the necessary mechanisms to compete globally, such as the appropriate physical and business infrastructures.

Until 1996, the stated main objective of Apec was trade liberalization. But this is only a means to achieve economic cooperation's real objective, which is sustainable development in accordance with Bogor Declaration.

The pass broke into the 41 to a US dollar level late last year, aided by high net inflows of remittances from overseas Filipino workers and foreign investments. The peso averaged at 42.798 to a US dollar from January to November, stronger than the 46.349 in the same period in 2006.

The NSO said that, despite the drop, electronics still remained the country's biggest share of the country's total exports for November at 61.3 percent.

Articles of apparel and clothing accessories were the second biggest export earner for the month, accounting for $138.76 million or 4 percent of total exports.

Copper was the second biggest export number for November, accounting for $192.31 million or 35 percent of total export earnings for the month.

BPI sees ₱37-39 to $1 . . .

From page B1

business process outsourcing, semiconductors and real estate/shopping mall projects.

"There is room now in the philippine economy to satisfy the growing appetite from top corporations," he said.

Montinola added that the bank was upbeat on local economic prospects even as it was continuing to monitor developments particularly the credit crunch in the United States.

"We are optimistic that the resilience of domestic demand, on account of the continued strength of the overseas Filipino remittances and increased participation of the private sector in infrastructure and other public-private partnership projects, will help cushion the impact of the global credit crunch," he said.

The peso surged against the dollar by 10.8 percent last year, making it Asia's best performing currency. As of yesterday, the peso closed unchanged at 40.74 to a dollar from Wednesday's 40.56.

BPI economist Antonio Pancho said there was also room for the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to cut benchmark interest rates this year.

But the US Federal Reserve Integration interest rates, the BSP will have room to follow," Pancho said. "Interest rates will go down but not as much as last year."

All of BPI's major businesses recorded robust growth in 2007, its overseas remittance business, which posted the highest volume for two straight years based on BSP data, grew by 23 percent last year to nearly $3 billion.

Pinamungajan fishers

The Dec. 12 meeting of the National Agriculture and Fisheries Council (NAFC) Committee on Aquaculture and Fisheries unanimously approved the DA's plan to reorganize fishers, displaced due to a fishing ban that gave way to oil and gas exploration drillings, should be justly compensated for their lost livelihood.

The ban is done that the fishers are only being given a measly P1,000 each of this (not enough for a family of five to survive), when their forgone livelihood is at least P5,000 a month. A task force was created to implement a Department of Agriculture order to conduct a third survey to determine how much the just compensation should be.

Again, this order is a means to achieve the objective of just compensation for the displaced fishers. Today, this order is still being implemented. The second survey has not started, and the affected fisher families have been suffering for the last two months on the equivalent unjust compensation of P6 per person per day.

If this real objective of just compensation were to be pursued, instead of forming an getting a DA order, then a review of the two prior surveys and an additional third survey, if proper necessary, should have been done even before the DA order. Even paying just compensation could have been given to at least alleviate the displaced fishers' hardship.

Neglected expo

Over the lines have been established, the real objective should be identified. If we take these two critical, but often neglected steps, governance will significantly improves.

The means must not be confused with ends. And this must always be the guiding principle for abroad because their hopes have a chance of becoming realities, rather than ruin into the dismal science we are forever living.

(The author is chair of Agrisearch, former secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects, and former undersecretary for Agriculture, and Trade and Industry. For inquiries and suggestions, e-mail agrisearch@yahoo.com or fax (02) 8924-4178.)

Commentary

Sun Life expects good year for bonds

By Doris C. Dumlao

SUN LIFE OF CANADA (PHILIPPINES) INC. sees a better year ahead for peso bonds but in the same time expects equities to outperform fixed income vehicles at the Philippine Stock Exchange index likely to hit 4,000.

Sun Life chief investment officer Richard Manuel told the business press that the bond market could perform better this year given prospects of a further drop in local interest rates.

When interest rates decline, bonds prices tend to move up thus resulting in higher investment yields for those "long" or locked in fixed income investments such as government securities.

For this year, Manuel said there would be room for local interest rates to fall further given the benign inflation environment, much-improved government fiscal position, well-controlled growth in money supply, prospects from the approaching peso and expected interest rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve.

He said the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas would likely slash its benchmark policy rates in tandem with the US Fed to curb the peso's sharp appreciation.

Proposal in the government's fiscal consolidation, he added, were enhancing the need for new borrowings and thereby creating a scarcity of local bonds.

In 2006 and 2000, Manuel said fixed income investors enjoyed two main sources of earnings—coupon price or interest payments and rising bond prices.

This year bidded not very when bond holders' yields dropped to an average 5.8 percent from double-digit levels.

He noted that fixed income yields would have been even lower in 2007 if not for the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' aggressive offering of high-yielding special deposit accounts, which allowed investors to earn yields on short-term issues that were equivalent to 15 year bonds.

Bond investors earn profits either by trading these SDA or simply awaiting interest payments until the bonds mature.

"But if you look at interest rate movements this year, you will again have a combination of coupon price payments and upward bond price movements. That would suggest to you the possibility that bond returns for 2008 will be much better than they were in 2007," Manuel said.

He projected that bond yields could rise this year to about 6-8 percent for those who had taken a "long" position.

But while bonds would likely fare better this year, Manuel noted that equities would still outperform on the backdrop of strong macroeconomic fundamentals.

Yesterday, the PSE rose by 1.13 percent to close at 3,464.60.

"Definitely low interest rates, strengthening currency and a very liquid banking sector that can finance economic expansion underpin our outlook," Manuel said.

Manuel added that the United States would not likely fall into a recession this year, thus boosting prospects for emerging markets like the Philippines.

He explained that the US Fed has enough flexibility to ease the worsening credit crunch and the US government likewise has enough fiscal elbow room to boost spending and thus pump prime the world's largest economy.

He added that 2008, being an election year, would also offer some cheerish in the United States.

On upside notion, Manuel said low interest rates were good for property stocks.

"A lot of people are shopping into dollar asset stocks like utilities which have assured cash flows," Manuel said.

PRULINK	PRU LIFE UK
Investment Account Performance Comparison	Unit Price (January 1, 2007)
Bond Fund - Peso	1.0000
Managed Fund - Peso	1.0000
Growth Fund - Peso	1.1000
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Maybank Ranked Among Asia Pacific's Largest and Strongest Banks

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia's largest and strongest bank, has been ranked among the Top100 Banks in the Asia Pacific by The Asian Banker 300 (AB300), an annual listing of the financial and business performance of the commercial banking industry in the region.

The study compares two different lists: the first ranks the top 300 banks in the region for asset size, and the second ranks these same 300 banks for their overall strength.

Maybank, the parent bank of Maybank Philippines, is ranked #92 (-1 spot), with asset worth US$ 91.1bn (+ 8.1% improvement from last year's figures — up 7 notches from 51 and a 10.8% increase in asset size. In fact, Maybank's asset size exceeds companies like Philippines' six biggest banks added together.

As far as the strength ranking is concerned, the AB300 measures a bank's scale, balance sheet growth, risk profile, profitability and asset quality using factors like audit-score, asset size, year-on-year growth in loans, deposits and operating profit, risk index, capital adequacy ratio, return on assets, return on equity, non-performing loans as a percentage of total income, bad loan coverage ratio and non-performing loan ratio. Maybank is ranked #61 by AB300 according to strength.

Maybank is present in 11 other countries worldwide, including key financial centers such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, London, New York, Singapore, Islamabad Bahrain.

In the Philippines, Maybank has a network of 45 branches nationwide, 20 of which are concentrated in strategic Metro Manila areas.

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THE POSSIBILITIES ARE INFINITE

iRemit says remittance volume up 37%

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

IREMIT INC. (IREMIT), THE COUNTRY'S largest Filipino-owned outbank remittance company, reported that it handled $762.3 million worth of remittances last year, an increase of 37.2 percent from $555.6 million in 2006.

In a statement, iRemit said total transactions handled by the company last year reached 1.86 million, an increase of 34.8 percent from the transaction count in 2006.

"The personal turnovers in volume and value were driven by the company's strong fourth quarter, which is traditionally the best performing quarter of the year due to increased remittances during the holiday season," said iRemit president Mario U. Sevilla.

He reported that the company recorded 187,500 transactions valued at over $79.2 million for December 2007.

"The transaction volume and value for December is the best single month performance in our history," he said.

"This is the fifth consecutive year of growth in terms of volume and value of remittances handled by the company," added Sevilla. "We hope to sustain this upward trend especially as we step up our expansion following our initial public offering."

iRemit has a network covering 25 countries across North America, Europe, Australia, the Pacific Islands and the Middle East.

The company listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange last year and proceeds from the IPO would be used to finance expansion in existing and new markets.

Luis Dorotheo, iRemit opened its doors to the growing Filipino communities in the Maldives/Manila.

The company also announced the opening of a new branch in Australia.

Located in Liverpool, New South Wales, it will mainly cater to the Filipino communities around Sydney.

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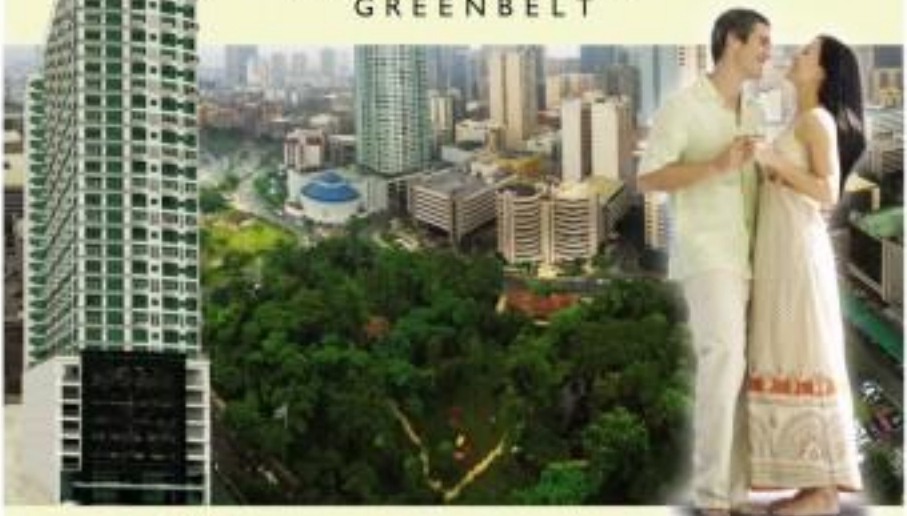

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Eco-entrepreneurs main drivers of green marketing

By Karen de Asis
Contributor

QUEEDOM City's underprivileged women make fashionably good use of unsold newspapers and magazines.

NATURESCAST is an innovative line of earth-friendly home and architectural products made from nature's scraps.

OVER-CONSUMPTIVE behavior and urban societies breed an overwhelming disposables: global industrialization and resulting flagrant disregard for the environment and the need to maintain biological diversity; overpopulation and lack of government safeguards to maintain the country's eco-balance are some of the major causes of ecological and health issues, deterioration of natural and renewable resources, air and water pollution and contamination.

The result is a looming scarcity for the future generation of even the most basic resources needed to sustain human life. 2007 Nobel peace prize environmentalist Al Gore, the Greenpeace movement, Earth Day Movement, World Wildlife Fund and many others, have fueled awareness for the present generation to take actionable steps to preserve the environment's natural resources and biodiversity since the '80s.

Two decades later, eco-entrepreneurs and leaders have responded with environmentally friendly products and services that matches mainstream products and services on price, performance, durability quality and aesthetics—a major turnaround from the first generation of poor performing and very expensive green labels.

How different is green marketing

Green marketing, also called eco- or environmental marketing, addresses the needs of consumers with raised consciousness on how their consumptive behavior can affect the environment and use of natural resources. Thus eco-marketers and entrepreneurs develop products and services responsive to the needs of eco-consumers while making certain that those have minimal or no contribution to environmental degradation.

Key to green marketing

Green marketing is unlike conventional marketing and is no mere lip service to environmental issues nor is it just a short-term campaign on environmental preservation. Following are inclusive of true-blue green marketing:

Products are designed green. Green marketers offer green consumers the option to choose products designed to be green from the time these concepts to acquisition of raw materials and production, usage and packaging, even after use and disposal. For example, green products most likely can and re-use renewable, sustainable, recyclable resources and materials; consume energy efficiently; do not or minimally emit toxic waste in air, land and water when compared with existing options, etc.

Environmental-friendly Toyota Prius is the best mass produced hybrid designed gasoline and/or electric power automobile introduced in Japan in 1997 and worldwide in 2000. The United States Environmental Protection Agency has lauded the 2008 Prius as the most fuel-efficient car sold in the US. Priced at nearly $20,000, the Prius drives from the gasoline engine and runs on battery pack at low speeds, when not starting, during reverse movements, and at descending speed thus, decreasing fuel consumption.

ECO-ENTREPRENEURS, 6/1

ECO-FRIENDLY products

'How important is corporate branding in consumer goods marketing and in services marketing?'

Q: THANKS FOR YOUR PREVIOUS column on product branding. Before you move on to corporate branding, is different from corporate branding. Your column said it is important to integrate corporate branding with product branding. But your explanation almost exclusively dealt with product branding. Our concern is now is with corporate branding and branding our services company.

We're two separate companies. One is into Ultimate supplements. That's where we think we're just about done with product branding and we'd like to do something else more specific to branding. Our other company is in services marketing consumer financing market. Because it's relatively new in this market, our branding concern is with corporate branding. Can you explain how we should go about integrating these elements health company and our consumer financing company? How important is this exercise?

A: Though related, the corporate branding issue for you extends even some health company is different from that of your consumer financing services company. So let's take up each one in turn.

The role of corporate branding in your product branding is to serve as the product brand's third tier brand. We once recommended that the appropriate strategy for your product branding is a "Three branding strategy". Let's briefly recall.

The first tier is "core branding." This tier's marketing function is to differentiate the brand from all others in the product category where it belongs. This positioning happens in the mind of the consumer when registering the brand name with the Bureau of Trade. Before the concept of brand equity gained wide currency, branding used to be just core branding, that is, 1 tier.

The 'Clear' case

The second tier is "sub-branding." Its main branding purpose is to communicate the brand's positioning, that is, its promise of value/Unique Selling Concept consumer priority values better than competing brands. This purpose is served by the sub-brand's core benefit or its existing one. For example, look at Unilever's new shampoo brand, Clear. Its sub-brand simply says and claims "No Dandruff." That is Clear's branding condition of its positioning on the product benefit of removing dandruff. For its existing, "old" toothpaste brand, Close-Up, the sub-brand tag says, "Whitens, white teeth, breaks breath." That's Close-Up's current positioning as a sub-brand. As you've noted before, this is a unique sub-branding move. It's a combo-and includes Close-Up's original positioning as a breath freshener. Thus, the positioning as whiter teeth are recalled first. That happened when the "fresh-er breath" benefit became a necessary requirement toothpaste attribute as other brands claimed and matched Close-Up on the "fresher breath" promise and delivery.

Finally, the third tier is "mark branding." Its marketing function is to legitimize the brand by means of its maker's reputation. In the case of Close and Close-Up, the mark brand's tag says, "By Unilever Philo...the Total Quality Company." As this example makes clear, mark branding is just another tier to the corporate branding.

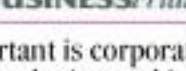
As is also clear from our examples, corporate branding's role in product branding is as the latter's "legitimator." That role is basically telling to market: "Close in Close-Up is a fully trustworthy brand. It's so You-Deb-or-Henry Bird made it. It's made by us rather than this reputable and respected global "total quality company, Unilever Philippines."

Branding for services

Let's now proceed to your other company that's in the consumer financing services market. In this connection about branding falls under the issue of how to do the correct corporate branding for a new services company. It's corporate branding on its own and not in relation at all to product branding.

Corporate branding's current best practice is a 2 tier branding strategy, not 3-tier. To continue discussing in concrete terms, let's look at some real examples:

HSBC: The World's Local Bank
Microsoft: Your Potential. Our Passion.
Rockwell: The Address of Professionals Minds



HP: A Division of Confusing
Metrobank: You're in Good Hands
Cebu Pacific : Here, Every Seats Gets Fly

From the foregoing examples, it should be clear that corporate branding aims to serve two marketing functions that are the reverse of those for the first tier, those of the differentiating function in the corporate core brand. Of HSBC, Microsoft, Rockwell, HP, MetroBank, and Cebu Pacific. Then, for the second tier, there's the positioning function in the corporate sub-branding. In the case of HSBC, its sub-branding is "The World's Local Bank." The other examples' corporate sub-brandings are obvious.

Because the practice of corporate sub-branding is different from that of product sub-branding, we need to clarify their differences. There are at least two important things needing clarifying.

The first is the way corporate sub-branding is executed. There's a question of the framing or wording of the corporate sub-branding as a corporate positioning. For our examples, let's ask: "Who is talking or saying each of those corporate positioning promises or claims? Is it the consumer who are talking or is it the company?" Here's what we think:

"The World's Local Bank." That's the company talking.

"You're in Good Hands." Like the preceding, that's the sub-bank talking.

"Here, Every Seats Can Fly." It's Cebu Pacific making the promise.

Why are we bothering about this? Is this a wrong way to do sub-branding for a corporate brand?

It's actually not as matter of what is wrong or what is right. It's a question of what's better. What's better than the alternative of framing the sub-brand claim where it's the consumers who are talking rather than the company?

What's an example of a corporate sub-branding where the message source is the consumers rather than the company? McDonald's is a good example.

Corporate core brand: "McDonald's."

Corporate sub-brand is "Love to Go."

The difference between the two sub-branding executions is clear. When the source of the corporate sub-branding claim is the company, the message is like a boast to someone not that familiar with the company. It's those already acquainted with the company or who are already in customer. The claim sounds like a plea for recognition and respect. Even McDonald's swapped "Your Personal Fast Service" sub-branding mode like an empty sales pitch saying: "Hey guys, we know your personal and believe at that's exactly our position."

Let it come from the source mouth.

Let it come from the source of the corporate sub-branding is clearly the consumers, the message acquires a high identification value to the target consumers. That's because it's like they are hearing what they themselves said. The message takes on the character of a testimonial. And remember what most of us talk consumption we about is testimonial. It's 10 times more persuasive than a laboratory-supported claim. "This is why we once supported that Globe's new corporate sub-branding of "about no. needs" because it's like it's saying "Globe understands us," if it has to have among its target market a much higher identification communication value. In fact, for the youth segment, given the youth's confused individualism and peer group orientation, the sub-branding should be "about no. needs vs. needs wants."

Are your title to the second important consideration in corporate sub-branding or more accurately, the corporate branding's second tier. That's the issue: Aside from communicating the corporate positioning, can corporate branding's second tier serve another marketing function?"

Yes, it can under another set of marketing circumstances. Again, let's use Ultra using a specific case. This is the case of an marketing services company. Its corporate core branding is "Isla Lipata & Co." It's actually the second largest auditing company in the Philippines. But it's a relatively unknown corporate brand to the general public. It's not even the core brand's fault. It's corporate core brand has low total unaided awareness even and even lower top-of-mind awareness. That's its current corporate branding problem.

The second-tier branding strategy is appropriate to effectively address this problem? To overcome an awareness hurdle, its second-tier branding need a be a legitimator. That's a "maker" like a Unilever who becomes-mind the target market's trust and confidence based on Lipata's 2-tier branding did not result in corporate sub-branding for its second tier to communicate its corporate positioning. That's not its second-tier branding problem at the moment.

Instead, a close mark branding for its second tier. Its 2-tier branding now reads as follows:

Corporate core branding = Isla Lipata & Co.

Corporate mark branding = "A Member Firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers".

But the global leader in auditing services, PricewaterhouseCoopers, in branding, in this case, its reputable name to overcome general public skepticism over the Isla Lipata corporation brand arising out of low awareness and market ignorance.

Now, if the corporate's branding strategy the second tier is a matter of the corporate branding need and problem. If the need is to position the company, the second tier must serve this purpose via a sub-branding move. The core line of our six examples. However, if the company's branding problem is to overcome low corporate brand awareness, then the second tier must address that problem via the mark branding option as in the case of Isla Lipata.

Keep your questions coming. Send them to us at marketingrx@hotmail.com. Good luck!

Eco-entrepreneurs main drivers ...

From page B1

Nemesis-set is an innovative line of earth-friendly home and architectural products made from nature's scraps. Wonderfiber, using agro-based wastes such as tallow, sugar, wood fibers and husks. Nemesis-set is biodegradable and renewable and came across from Europe, USA and Asia.

A pioneering concept of Filipino eco-entrepreneurs and environment advocates Pete and Gerhard Neubauer, Nemesis-set grows home furnishings including tables and benches, lightings, shelves and wall art, decorative accessories, etc. on contract in Europe and the United States by exclusive retailers like Smith & Hawken, American Signature, Sharp & Heath (SG) in Germany, Holme Morrys and Crate & Barrel in the UK, Antonelli & Tessuto of Italy, Stockloop, to name a few.

According to Catherine Nabontayan-ranwen a demand by the environment-conscious consumers for eco-friendly products, especially in the building arts and design, she explained that the idea for Nemesis-set came about one afternoon when the company conducted a clean-and-green drive among its employees to Compostela, Cebu. While looking at the mountains of discarded bamboo & thatch (SG) on the way, Pete and Catherine came up with the concept for Nemesis-set.

"We thought, there must be some use for these heaps of garbage," retells Catherine. The sight of so much garbage gave them a lot of how we can continually depleting our natural resources. And there are times when I worry there will not be enough resources for our children, for instance, you come to a point when you wonder what your children are cheated through overexploitation of our natural resources."

The environment-conscious couple found the answer in Nemesis-set. Together, they developed a method for transforming these rainwater into functional objects. Pete explained that these scraps are shredded through a special machine and, today a water-based binding ingredient, we shaped into the unique and functional items designed by local artists.

Another display of Filipino ingenuity in green products comes from the manufactured wood masters of Cebu who are under the auspices of the 3M (Bagong Minerayang) Foundation, a nonprofit organization with deep commitment to the empowerment and environmental sustainability, managed by Councilor Bienvenido Benitez-Oy and recently awarded the National Gabaldon Recognition by the Federation of Industries and Health Development Institutes (Dwelle).

The women artisans of the 3M foundation are able to make fashion bags recycled from unsold newspapers and magazines. The bags have made their way to parts of Asia and Europe and have become a source of sustainable livelihood and development for these women.

Soon-to-be the duty-when-eco-marketing campaigns centered to treat themselves and environmentally friendly. Eco-marketing today is grounded on informed choices.

Bayanihan, originally a stone company to Chemical Equipment that sold equipment and tools for Alpine climbers, is one of the world's renowned environmental professional outsourcing to Alpine and outdoor enthusiasts of quiet sport that do not require a

motor—climbing, skiing, snowboarding, surfing, paddling and trail running. In pursuit of environmentalism began when co-founder Peter Chemical, who started climbing at age 14, realized that climbing equipment evolved and had serious effects on natural wilderness. Benitez-Oy's students only organically grown cotton fabric and subversive and in its first decade had sales of about $100 million dollars in the United States and Europe. It is customer fashion that refuse to consumers who prefer very constructed friendly products. Bayanihan uses only environmental messages in its marketing communications campaigns, in-door catalogs and websites. In its

THE FIRST Asia-ultra eco-seal on Filipino designed 100 percent natural and organic eco-based supplement adults, baby when given.

other supportive and advocates of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Asia Eco technology simplicity buyers (ISG). There are organic buyers who believe in material simplicity and conservation over conspicuous consumption, who rejects toiling down or human living one's living and working conditions while advocating simple is beautiful over big is better and who believes in the use of appropriate technology over automatic application of high technology, evident the importance of ecological awareness, protection and preservation, spirituality and personal growth. Because of its simplicity, it is very complexity buyers can come from different economic groups.

Who are attracted largely by products and services that are durable or have longer shelf life while being natural, besides clean organic and naturally sweet. Food that are simple preservatives, flavorants, drug residues, etc.; recycled and reusable green products and packaging, etc. Then read labels, take preventive measures and are willing to shift and adopt a new brand perceived to fit the values of the organization.

Tom's of Maine is a line of alternative, plant and herb-based personal care products including toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo, mouthwash, soap, shaving cream. It was founded in 1970 and does not use artificial or synthetic preservatives, flavors, sweeteners, etc.; recycled and reusable green products and packaging, etc. Then read labels, take preventive measures and are willing to shift and adopt a new brand perceived to fit the values of the organization.

Tom's of Maine is a line of alternative, plant and herb-based personal care products including toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo, mouthwash, soap, shaving cream. It was founded in 1970 and does not use artificial or synthetic preservatives, flavors, sweeteners, etc. The products are not tested on animals and it uses recycled paper board packaging printed with soy-based inks. The business does their direct sewing machines who believe that "people and nature deserve respect" and who would promote only products that are good and better now than did not harm the environment, has grown from a $1,000 loan from a friend in 1968 to a nearly $100 million company in 2007 resulting from a strategic partnership with Colgate-Palmolive.

Have green products certified. Third party certifications from reputable green bodies help consumers in the assurance of the product's green integrity. There are worldwide eco-seals and country-based seals. Whichever eco-seal is used, eco-marketers must ensure that the certifying body or organization is a recognized and respected by environmentalists. With the seal comes the obligation to educate consumers in which criteria or measure was the seal extended.

One of the first Filipino-designed products to obtain an eco-seal from Australia is the organic and natural food supplement MSM Leaves of Life made from alfalfa, barley and wheat grass. Organic eco-seals are given to food produced by farmers without using traditional pesticides, fertilizers, radiation and observe conservation of soil and water. Organically grown is the key word. Food that are certified (National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia). MSM Leaves of Life is an antioxidant and mineral energizing food supplement that neutralizes damaging free radicals in the body's internal organs resulting from the lifestyle and environment, thereby increasing energy during the day and providing deep sound sleep at night.

Green marketing leads to an otherwise lifestyle but to learn out of the person and dedication of eco-entrepreneurs and leaders who respect the environment for today and tomorrow, diversify of natural resources and a mission to preserve nature's resources for future generations to come.

More about voluntary simplicity consumer vs. the hard-selling branding strategy in "Gabaldon Recognition: The Blind Branding Issue." The author is an adjunct faculty of the Asian Institute of Management teaching strategic brand management and may be reached at www.kasamahan.com or kbayani@yahoo.net.

RP's biggest bookstore taps high-end market in Hong Kong

A PATRIOT book customer's through the store.

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

With close to 100 branches all over the Philippines, "crangorry killer" National Bookstore Inc. is fast running out of room to expand.

The retail chain has thus set its sights on planting its flag on foreign shores, starting with Hong Kong.

"We are running out of growth opportunities in the country because there are very few new markets open to us," explained Antonio Ramos, general manager of NBS Hong Kong Ltd. "Our logical next step is to go international."

As an Oct. 1 last year, the first branch of Metrobooks National Bookstore's international brand, is Sands Road West Kowloon, opened its doors to the Hong Kong public and the territory's book lovers were treated to a new concept in book retail.

Ramos told BusinessFriday in an interview that considerable effort was put in designing the store, not only because it is National's first foray into the foreign market but also because Metrobooks was targeting a "very high-end" market.

The name was chosen because "it evoked a cosmopolitan image that fits in well with Hong Kong."

Metrobooks is one of the modern winners of Domoore, a premium mar-

METROBOOKS in National Bookstore's first attempt at cracking the foreign market.

ket mall in New Kowloon near the train station, which also hosts top international brands such as Gucci and Versagino.

As such, Ramos says Metrobooks had to have an "international look" to appeal to the new audience, quite different in expectations and purchasing power from the more to middle market fare that made National Bookstore the giant retail outfit that it is in the Philippines.

The Metrobooks store in Rowloon has a welcoming shop front with low, rises described as "modern Asian." The store was designed to beckon readers inside the store and entice them to browse leisurely.

Hopefully, they'll leave the store with a book or two in hand.

There is a pathway that leads customers around the 600-square meter store and Metrobooks' fronts of a reading bar with a view of Victoria Harbor and the Hong Kong skyline.

A library with over two dozen books provided inside the store to make way for select events such as book readings, author signings, cooking demonstrations and art classes.

To further endear itself to the Hong Kong market, Ramos says Metrobooks invested in Chinese titles and foreign and local magazines preferred by the locals.

"Because we're National, we have a small supply section. We will expand it when the office spaces on top of the mall open up," he added.

Ramos says National Bookstore decided to start its international expansion with Hong Kong because many of the locals speak English and it is close to the Philippines.

"I guess just logistically Hong Kong was the closest, plus its economy is doing well," Ramos says. "We are likewise exploring the possibility of opening in our Southeast Asian markets."

It has been only a little over three months since Metrobooks debuted on the Hong Kong retail scene, but the results have encouraged the group enough to cautiously look at possibly opening another store in the financial hub by the end of the year.

"We hope to build a base in Hong Kong of about three or four branches. That is a good operational size, and then we will apply our learnings here to other markets," Ramos says.

DAVVE, RELEASES FIRST MATURITY BENEFITS. Dave Plans Inc. (formerly Berkley Plans) released (L) first wave of maturity checks to its first group of pioneer plan holders. Receiving their checks from David Plans EVP and branch manager Aurora Brito (left) are Ariel Corpuz, Cynthia Talampas and Jesus Roi Villanueva with family. David Plans Inc. is a subsidiary of David Holdings Inc., which acquired all of Berkley International Philippines and its affiliates, including marketing as Family Plus. It is now headed by new owner and president Daniel L. Villanueva who was the former company's EVP and CFO. (David has close to 10,000 plan holders.

Widow gets insurance coverage

ELISSA AND ANITA ROSE COPINO (EMETE) are as friends during their college days. Their friendship blossomed into love, and eventually married. Their 12-year marriage bore them three children—a son and two daughters—called "always near" each.

"When my husband passed away it was difficult for me. I was so depressed," softly she says, neatly clutching on her hands. "It just hasn't been the same. It's hardest at night—it's difficult to sleep when you're alone in bed."

But going into 2008, Elissa has something to smile about. She received more than P2 million in her insurance coverage from AXA Philippines for having bought the policy that helped AXA reach the P5 billion mark in new business sales for 2007.

She also got a roundtrip airfare from Cebu to Manila, six overnight stay at a luxury hotel, shopping money, time's at a five-star hotel in Makati with the AXA Philippines senior management team, led by Andrew D. Mead, president & CEO.

"At this stage in my life, and after having gone through the loss of a loved one myself, I truly appreciate the gesture (AXA)," relates Elissa, whose new P5 million GHF policy was actually her one of five she has with AXA."

Elissa shares her thoughts on planning ahead for the financial future: "When my husband passed away I only got a small amount from his pension and it wasn't even enough to cover for the estate taxes. It took me years to pay off the debts from my husband's business. That is why I sincerely reminded that I should be prepared earlier and included life insurance in my financial planning as well."

Elissa strongly advises not to invest in just any insurance company. "I bought education plans for all three of my children," she recalls. "Unfortunately only two of them got their scholarship because of what happened (a couple months ago). A few years ago."

"That is why, nowadays, I entrust my money with a company that is really big, is known all over the world and performs well worldwide," she shares.

"The investment funds of AXA have shown significant yields in the past, giving investment returns of as high as 70 percent, because of the strong performance. AXA is considered one of the fastest growing insurers in the country having catapulted to the Top 3 in the industry in 2006.

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My husband might end up with a zebra for a wife in exchange for a son

LIFE & TYLE

CLARINS Body Treatment Oil-Tone helps prevent stretch marks during pregnancy

My war against stretch marks

KNOCKOUT!

Ria Francisco-Prieto

BEAUTY

CLARINS makeup is luminous, colorful and long-lasting

I'M GOING THROUGH A lot of anti-stretch marks products now that I'm pregnant. But somehow, Clarins Tonic feels less icky on my skin. The fact that this oil is yellow and somewhat golden in color makes me think of it as liquid gold, and that gives me much needed comfort.

I massage the tonic on my stomach, thighs, back, and even my bum. I'm seven months on the way (that means I've a little more than two months to find out if this product works. If it does, I promise to write a whole testimonial about it. If it doesn't, well, then still be obvious that I lost the stretch marks war.

As for the rich, I usually go for H Seaweed Oil, which two of my friends had recommended. Trust me, it works, so I practically bathe myself with it, coupled with the prayer that it lasts longer than it does.

They say that stretch marks are hereditary. I have only my mom to blame, I guess. I'm prepared for the worst. The mom told me husband again (but after giving birth he'd rid up with a tube for a wife in exchange for a son.

CLARINS Spring collection

Speaking of Clarins, its wonderfully vibrant spring collection is out. The makeup is long-lasting and the colors happy and easy to use. (Don't know how anyone will manage to have a bad day once they start using these joyful, luminous colors.)

Here are some collection highlights:

Single Eye Color

This comes in 12 exquisite shades. The shadow can be used alone for a single-step finish; just layer on to add intensity. The finish is flawless, long-wearing and feels like second skin.

Gloss Appeal

I love using this gloss for the day and on top of my liner shade at night. It's exhilarating and gives that extra oomph that every girl craves for.

Eye Pencil

If you haven't discovered the wonders an eye pencil can do for you, then now is the time to start. This soft smudge pencil provides a precise line, and its sponge tip helps to achieve that blended finish.

Eyeliner

This has a custom finish applicator that gives the desired line to your lashes every time you use it.

Clarins' Spring collection has more great products to offer, so I suggest that during your lunch break or in between a stressful day, visit the Clarins counter at Rustan's and get your guaranteed pick-me-upper!

E-mail me at rbeauty@inquirer.com.ph

Nightmare salon

THIS ARTICLE HAS A MEMO-ries more to it, but it is better left unsaid.

There's a superstition that anyone about to be married should avoid leaving the house in one shoe more or sandal.

Before my despedida, I accompanied my mom to a couple salons in Manila of the-day eyelash extensions at P900.

Aware that most of my readers have to travel a long way to get to a salon in Makati, I felt it was a great idea to try the service as it usually costs P1,000-P2,500.

Mom walked ahead of me as I took note of the hand-marks and street signs. I saw her push open the door and walk in. Then the door closed right before I could follow her in.

I read the sign "Push" so I gave the door a light shove. Nothing. I tried again but it wouldn't open. I pulled it slightly but it would not move.

I waited for someone to open the door for me, but nobody was looking my way or entering outside my hand-bag.

I looked for a window or an unlocked stroller, but there was nothing. I was just too weak from dieting, but I pushed the door a little harder with one arm.

I heard several thuds which turned out to be cracking glass, and then I heard a big crash as the entire bottom of the glass door fell around my feet.

In shock, I could hear my mom yelling to pause her eyes stay away from the door. But my driver told me to move slowly and shake my shoes to shake off any pieces of glass that had gone in.

My mom and I looked at each other from opposite ends of the shop and I remember her face was not a mirror as it was me. Surprised we did not have to use an shoes was no harm done, and eating would be a bigger hassle.

My mom proceeded to have her manicure-cheat after the told me to come inside and said she would be done after an hour.

As I sat there still in shock,

MAKEOVER 911
Kenny Salas

the managers came over to me and asked in Tagalog, "Miss's fine?"

Pay up

It dawned on me she had sensed we were not going to steer a fuss or she would save it second and demand I pay for the shoes.

My instinct was to walk out of there, but my mom was trapped in a private room to goodness knows what they would subject her to if I left her alone.

I played along and told her to get an estimate for the door, not committing anything. To get them at ease I decided to have my eyebrows and nails done while waiting for my mom.

The door, they said, would cost P12,000-P15,000 because the glass door was thick and of good quality.

They door had an automatic built feature, but had no burner outside, just a "Push" sign, and since they were all here they could not afford to spinning the door. That was why I stood there for some time.

When my mom was done we paid our bill (with liquid cost). But they demanded we have money for the door.

My mom said half would perhaps be okay as we could not get out of there, but the staff cursed more, saying that if I did not push the door it would not have been. They said they were telling me to stop pushing, but I proceeded to violently shake it.

My mom ordered me to call the lawyer, who told me half was more than generous because I could actually sue the shop for negligence and threat of bodily harm.

The verbal bashing we got was scary. They were insisting it was our fault. So my mom called the police and

NIGHTMARE >>

GIGAN Reyes, veteran of the hour Wynn Wijan Ong and Therese Santos

TRISH Villanueva, Lucille Villanueva and Ruby Acuesta

CAMILLE Gaston Lorenzo, Marivic Vergara-Prada and Maribeth de Leon

EVELYN Fulton, Pilar Sierra Avalos and Gaston Sicart

NATHAN Cabico and Wynn manager Patty Quinzeros

PICKY Pueblo Chiquito and Vicky Bacon

PRIDE Colmegna, Jonathan Bert and Francesca Tarabet

FIRMA owners and dealers Ricky Toledo and Cleto Vijandre (right) with Mega's Lorraine Belmonte

Gem of a collection

WYNN WYNN OPAL jewelry designer to avail Ugle Arboleda, held her first show in two years in December 2006 collection, Intersection, at the Intramural Firma in Greenbelt 3. The launch and party were hosted by Firma's Chito Vijandre and Ricky Toledo.

To have an advance glimpse of the collection, sit exclusive Janice Zobel honored in early since he had scheduled Ayala Museum either. His daughter Stella and daughter-in-law Bit were there, too, having been artisans of Wynn Wynn's work since the designer started. Josephine del Gallego could not resist trying on the one-of Wynn Wynn was wearing that night.

Designers Vicky Perdido Gia parels, who had her eye on "Scotlass" and endless stunning ring, was discussing the pieces with Bernice Fuentes.

Vicky's niece, international jog and jewelry designer Bea Valdes, also had her eye on the collection, dares to mention Allegra to attend the happening, dabbings. She arrived with sister Margo, who's responsible for marketing Bea's line to the world.

Lulu Tan-Gan came with daughter Jessica, who was so happy to pick her favorite from the fabulous collection.

The Manila Polo Club's first woman president, Isabel Cave Wilson, sported a necklace of gold leaves while Greg and Wong Dominique showed her support for the event.

Stunning Missy Ayala was opting for tropical elegance with Wynn Wynn's sculptural "fountain" earrings.

Together with the launch of the Intersection collection was a preview of pieces from Wynn Wynn's Maxx collection for AC+032, Orbs and Nicky's new store in Greenbelt 5, pictured.

Meanwhile, guests enjoyed the scrumptious host d'oeuvres and wines prepared by chef Ronnie Bodoso of Restaurante Pan y Pescado, the new Greenbelt 5 restaurant inspired by Ronnie's "fish like Tuesday."

It was definitely a glitzy night in the company of Cosmo Maxfli's members, dabbings.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Beatrice Arcache

Photos by Aiko Van Hagen
using Rodish Kitty Share

Triathlon triumph

Whoever said that the gorgeous and the beautiful do not come out to sweat out and play under the sun knows absolutely nothing, palusgo.

The beautiful people went to the Complejo La Torre y El Mar for the three-sport triathlon event organized by Torremar de Punta Fuego, and believe us, the spectacular beach made the early night match beholding.

These days were, from world-renowned athletes to highly respected industry insiders and baby-faced celebrities were competing for bragging rights, making Cosmo the hottest event of the month on land and on sea, dabbings.

Leading the pack of triathletes were Mark Casadonte, head coach of the national triathlon team, and Philippine Freeze swimmers Ian Grandeza and Carina Hernandez, who all landed in the Top 3 in their respective divisions.

Landon Pacific Corp.'s top brass were present, led by Alfred Xavier-Burgos III, SVP for sales and marketing. Pat Tan-Gan, SVP for leisure and resort communities and GJ Roque, marketing manager for Torremar de Punta Fuego. With them was PR booster Chris Cubillo, master-of-ceremonies.

Hosted by travel and leisure enthusiast Janice Lorenzo and Paolo, the happening was made even more exciting by the big-band sound of Bruce Rhinehart, who gave us a taste of their unique energetic fusion of a variety of songs from standards to pop rock.

"Landon Pacific Corp. is a multi-product developer of high-quality residential resorts, leisure homes, residential developments, shopping centers and CBDs, and industrial parks," Steve Rogers said.

"The company continues to provide superior value in its development of outstanding lifestyle products that revolutionize the very way we live."

The event was so successful that everyone was beaming with pride way into the night, dabbings.

New resort wear

Welcome to winter-y March, dabbings!

But to think that summer is just two months away and going ahead of the pack is talented designer Dolores Ramos Blair, who made her grand entrance to the elegant, tres chic Greenbelt 5, no less, with her cool Pariah Resort Wear collection.

She was joins other young supertalented designers who have all made their new homes in the ever-upscale Greenbelt 5, dabbings.

"I am so proud, yet so humbled at the same time, to be surrounded by great talents, which is very inspiring," Patricia told me.

She said this would be the first time she would create clothes that were not formal wear, yet dressy enough for special occasions and at the same time affordable, palusgo.

And since she's now doing ready-to-wear, her new collection should cater to all the busy women who don't have the time for made-to-order clothes.

This gifted young woman has now joined other accomplished designers who have put up their shops at Greenbelt 5 such as Randy Ortiz, Dennis Lustico, Joey Samonte, Van Ness, Amelia Lee, Ecstasy, Lot Two Gun, Kate Trinidad, Vic Rocha and Michi Calixto.

Lovers of accessories may also visit Greenbelt 5's accessories shops by Victoria Diaries, Jaime Arranz, Dutch Carriage of Avon, Emi Jorge, Lilia Clemente, Ana Rocha and Arnel Pupa.

"This is our show window in the world, our pride, and our identity," Patricia said proudly.

Other shops at Greenbelt 5 are Rinkl's, Blanket Ave., Mia, Rufio, All The Pieces, and Shell & Goldfish.

Soon to join the gang are Bonnie Paysible, Rob, Mary Jo Mee Jewelry, no less.

Yeah, Greenbelt 5 is definitely shaping up to be the chic-est, must-go-to shopping destination!

Check it out, palusgo.

SOPHIA Elizalde, Sharmaine Arnaiz, Kerry Lhuillier and Mary Ayala

PATTY Calip and Cherrie Ty

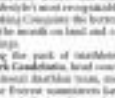
MICHAEL Salomon, David and Mia Kuntzer, and Rhianna Martinez

BEA Valdes with sister Margo and TJ Trinidad

LORETTE Colmegna, Monet Schmitt and Chingin Lopez

MS. FILIPINA Universe 2004 Lucia Andrea Ramos, Chris Cubillo, Pierre Fuego (author/organizer of Fuego and Jeanne Mercer

CHIC Ruby Gan, designer Bea Rocha and hubby Manny Calayag. Designer Patricia Ramos Blair (right photo) is the latest fashion maven to open shop at Greenbelt 5.

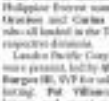

CHICHEL Jones

TATLER'S Dean Dessalles and Cindy Ying

LANDCO Pacific Corp. top brass Alfie Xavier-Burgos

BLUEMAND Capsters instructor Fuentes Cosplans, ITC boss Benny Meyrowitz and top model John Lopez

MELANIE Cervera, Lois Quinton and Teresa Herrera


SUTTON Scott Jacobs Mendez

DESIGNERS Rocha Moreno and Via Rocha

BRITISH Ambassador Peter Buckingham and wife Jill Buckingham

INTERNATIONAL model Hope Ono

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New year beauty blowout

THE FACE SHOP THE NO. 1 KOREAN beauty brand, ushers in 2008 with a big sale—a whopping 30 percent off on some of your favorite makeup, nail, body, hair and skincare products.

After all that Christmas shopping, now's the time to treat yourself to The Face Shop's soothing Peppermint Foot Scrub and smoothing Peppermint Heel Lotion.

Post-holiday stress? There's nothing like indulging in the finest natural ingredients of The Face Shop's Rose Cactus Wash Sheet and Tangerine Anti-Dandruff Scalp Massage Essence.

Then, get all glamorized up in The Face Shop's stunning array of lipstick, lip gloss, eye liner, eye shadow, mascara, pressed powder, luminescent loose powder and nail polish.

All these and much, much more are now at 30-percent off at The Face Shop, which has a branch in most major malls. The fabulous New Year beauty promo is ongoing until Jan. 20.

Nightmare salon

Front page C1

that was the only time they barked down and changed their tune, saying we didn't have to call in the cops.

At the police station, I was asked by the police if I was hurt or wounded in any way and if I would like to file a case against the salon.

I said no because I was getting nervous. But the women from the shop wanted it and I admitted to breaking the door and I should pay.

The police got nice statements and said as in cattle in outside court because lawyers would cost more.

Bad result: I am not paying and the women is now asking me for a smaller amount, saying she will settle for half.

Things you should know:

1. If you hit the door with a pole or chair at it, that is the only time you're liable. Otherwise, the establishment is responsible for your safety.

2. There should be a buzzer, doorman or at least a sticker for any unlocked door. The door was built to resist off snatchers so how could I, all of 5'2", using one arm, break it so easily unless it was already defective?

3. Call the police and lawyers right away so there will be an objective person who will take statements for the record.

4. Supervision does not hold water in court of law so spoken statistics.

5. Forget the beauty treatment appointment and walk away!

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE
CHEVROLET

Editor Chelo Barot-Formoso
LIFESTYLE
Contributing Editors: Jenni Epperson and Ayalee Alberto-Southwood

FASHION

OLD-HOSE and pale-yellow cinched gown

FASHION FLASH FASHION FLASH

Hot tunes

IT'S TIME TO STRAIGHTEN out your mood and get your day right without a wrinkled spot in your groove. Homewaide's Iron Speaker (P499) is the perfect tool for that ready-to-wear swagger.

More an iron is not only for clothing, in this case, but also an AM/FM radio, speaker for iPod/mp3 players and an alarm clock all in one.

It comes in two hot colors (orange and lime) to brighten your day. Lightweight and portable, its battery-operated feature (two AAs) allows one to use it even in the outdoors, especially now that summer is near.

With this iron, who needs a heater? Better yet, who will ever get bored? All you need are those cuties to get your steam on, and you're ready to start the day steam-free! *JE*

Available at Homewaide stores nationwide

STRIKE while the iron is hot.

SIZZLING stories: Hook this hot speaker into your iPod and MP3 players.

GREEN diagonal-stripe sweat dress

MAUVE mini dress

The future classic

A simple and elegant aesthetic usually means structured cuts, styles and colors

Photographer Iain Summers
Styling Melvin Mejica
Model Sitti
Makeup Gino Llanes
Hair Brands
Special thanks to Kendra Ramos-Padilla and Hilary Gaviz
Clothes by Nido by Pam Quiñones
Available at The Ramp, SM Shoemisia, Ayala Center

IN FASHION, OR ANY self-expression, having a point of view can spell the difference between boring and brilliant. What may be considered as classic and traditional may become formulaic; a cookie-cutter style may offer no perspective or imagination.

The rules vary from person to person. Depending on individual taste, style classics telling traits about the personality. The aesthetic can range on extremes.

A simple and elegant aesthetic usually means structured cuts, styles and colors.

There who subscribe to the style maxim the more complex, the better, may have pieces that are unique enough but remain totally practical.

Modern statement seems to appeal to a new generation where "classics" have changed because the modern woman's lifestyle has changed.

Seemingly the 'new classics' have begged to be defined, and they are represented more as a new modern femininity guiding global ready-to-wear collections. This is the future feminine—a style that holds sacred the female silhouette.

Classic pieces are not just simple pieces, colors and shapes that are unique and wearable, but are also somehow all-seasons, all-occasions and always appropriate and practical.

The future-feminine style epitomizes and promotes the feminine silhouette and fuses it with the lifestyle of the modern woman.

One singer in Manila who's a disciple to this new classic is SIXX. She's shown here in her personal style...very relaxed but still very feminine, a standout on stage.

Here are the elements that define the future feminine style:

The new LBD—The 'L' may stand for "little" or "long." It is versatile and can be worn in a variety of ways.

The paradigm shift—The new shift dress doesn't have to come in plain fabric anymore, but is made interesting with unique details which can go from the conference table to the cocktail table.

The emotive basic—This piece is still considered basic enough as layer or accessories, but it should come in a color or in colors that work well with the wearer's skintone. It is no longer just a black or gray piece, it can be a day or evening piece depending on how it's accessorized.

The new maxi—The long silhouette is not closer to the body and may or may not be clothed, depending on the mood or occasion. Left to hang loosely on the body, it is an easy casual outfit (see sketch); it is easily wearable to something more formal.

The skirt-dress—With its asymmetric shape and heavier fabric, this new skirt may even sometimes double as a strapless dress. It should be long enough to reach mid-calf and yet stylish enough if paired with a plain corset or top.

The new rules—The mini dress is no longer sparse like its predecessors. Though it still shows more leg, it has voluminous sleeves that pronounce a relaxed fit on top. It is a unique and subdued alternative to a party dress. Paired with chic jeans or leggings, the new mini is also a great casual ensemble.

E-mail the author at fashion@philstar.com.ph

Jessi Epperson

TWEED skirt-with-patchwork and blunt-sleeveless top

BLUE and gold halter mini dress

SITTI STYLE

IT'S RARE THAT YOU FIND someone who looks just as good in person as she does onstage.

Dependent photos usually show all the flaws of stars and celebrities, making us see just how much difference celebrities look in real life, away from big events where they're all glamorized up.

But Sitti, the Bossa-born sensation, has proven otherwise. With her own personal character of being more subdued and elegant, she has slowly evolved into a simple yet stylish maven.

She is the one based in the celebrity world where role reps and jeans are the norm.

Sitti has been hailed in Asia for making the bossa-nova trend hit a high in the last two years.

Since then, she has shown her versatility by mingling pop tunes and those covers of such iconic favorites as the Spice Girls, Madonna, U2 and Everything but the Girl.

She has also recently came out with a "Club MTV" album that has topped the charts all over again.

Also is aware that fashion is integral to her career. Here's a preview of Sitti's style in bizzare. Fashion spent a day with the fashionable siren at The Ramp in Greenbelt wearing her own picks that showcase her distinctive style.

Describe your personal style. How has your manner of dressing changed through the years?

I'm a go-for-comfort kind of girl, and though it sounds like a cliche, I really am like that. I like to keep things simple and clean, very casual and relaxed. Knowing show biz made me broaden my horizons more in terms of clothes.

What do you think of when choosing clothes for your shows, concerts, performances?

Comfort comes first of course especially when I'm performing. The next comes after the style, what color suits me, the cuts I have short or long it is]... I may be a conservative girl, but I'm not covered in towels at all.

What's your favorite outfit (for) What colors do you prefer? What styles and cuts?

I like colors that complement my skintone. I like bright colors whenever I'm performing and neutrals when I'm not. White is always a winner, too. In terms of style, I like wearing shoes sexy dresses because that style suits my body best and makes me look tall and thin. I like to keep things simple and classy.

What distinguishes your "stage" style from other female performers?

Whenever I perform, I always put much thought into my clothes, of course with the help of my stylist and my manager. What's appropriate for the occasion or event, what would look good on me... outside shoes would go with which and so on and usually the questions that come to mind.

As a veteran performer I always give it my all, and my outfit and overall look for every performance is not an exception. Suffice it to say, I'm not a wear-whatever-it-shows-kind of performer.

How do you see yourself evolving as an artist?

I would like to try new genres apart from bossa nova. I would also want to get into jazz, classical and the like. I love bossa, but it wasn't that's to supermom and try new things. Sitti will still be Sitti in 2008, I won't change. But I will continue to evolve in all that I do. That's always been my philosophy whether in music, fashion or life.

GOINGS ON

Three-day sale

SM A. LACA EAST GRAND MALL hosts clearance sale of up to 70 percent on selected items in the department store, supermarket, Home Gallery, Planet Toys and in over 300 specialty stores and boutiques. The Clearance Sale is set on Jan. 18, 19 and 20. Exchange your P500 single or accumulated purchase receipt during the three- day sale to a raffle coupon and get a chance to bring home mini-means makes. Join the Lucia East Supermarket's Scratch Raffle Plus promo. For every P500 single or accumulated purchase receipt until March 31, a shopper gets a scratch card. Get combination and home appliances will be given away. A brand new Toyota Vios, Kyrnax Cerox 118 wallaroo plus more appliances are also at stake. For details, call 584-5400 loc 118.

CLASSES BEYOND BUSINESS. Maya Kitchen resumes its classes with the Catering Services Jan. 11-12, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. It offers nonconventional, step by step training on logic and technics on menu including families, personal menu and costing. Participants get a free catering cookbook, Flavored Rice Toppings and Preserved Meats, Jan. 13, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Basic Salmon, Jan. 15-16, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Seafood and Carabeena Business, Jan. 18-19, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., can help people set up, run or grow a food business. The Maya Kitchen is at 8/F, Liberty Building, E. de los Santos (formerly Pasay Road), Makati. Tel. 8901186 or 8924111 loc 108, www.themayakitchen.com.

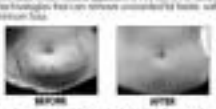
CAKE DECORATING CLASS. Dorothy's Cooking School offers classes on cooking, baking and cake decorating starting Jan. 12. The courses will include a chocolate recipe collection and a Valentine-cooking class. The school is owned by cookbook author Dorothy Florencio and is in Ellas Mirida, Quezon City. Tel. 7211733.

FASHION SHOW. A pre-payment fashion show for the Mr. and Miss JBU-Jose Rizal University non-bed will be held Jan. 20 at the 21 activity Center. Reginald Kitso (tel 7-33-3996, 0920-9022-0803) will host a showdown on Jan. 27 sponsored by Dance Management Group. Singing every Thursday in Alexis's is the "Voice of a Star" singing contest. On Jan. 17, the two-livelihood courses, Mr. Gong at Tinoga Cenacar Library Pengkabohayan Rizalina proceeded by Senate president Manny B. Villar, will resume. Reuben Laurente, former member of The Company, will promote his album "Passion for Two" Jan. 13. At Metropolis Star Alabang, grand winners of DreamCT's Little Big Star Ralph Sulaza and Micah Tiers will perform Jan. 13. Chance Peregrina will be at the mall Jan. 20. Lawrence will promote his new album Jan. 21. Livelihood courses will also resume Jan. 12. Ji Clase and Magic Show will be staged every Sunday in January starting on the 13th.

BIG PICTURE DISCOUNT. Digipoint, the country's only print-and-deliver photo-sized shop, is bringing back "Picture Fever" Jan. 11-March 14. A 4R print costs P4.00 entries a couple except transaction for 19-99 pieces and the customer to 15 free prints; 81-99 pieces, 20 free prints; 81-199 pieces, 25 free prints; and 191 pieces or more, 30 free prints. Picture Fever is available in all branches for both cash and credit card transactions. Digipoint (www.digipoint.com.ph) has over 60 branches nationwide and is owned and operated by LBC Imaging Network, Inc.

"Zunic gave good and bad results. Good because I see and I feel that I lost the fat I wanted to lose. Bad because now I need to shop for smaller-sized pants!"

— Authentic customer statement, October 2007 (not a paid endorsement)



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INDIGENOUS design by Laurel

PHILIPPINE contingent for Bali Fashion Week 2007

WHITE tassel dress by Auxron

Filipino designers shine in Bali Fashion Week

Rajo Laurel and Ivar Aseron are the first Filipino designers to participate in the event's seven-year history

Text and photos
by Bianca Consunji
Lifestyle Reporter

DEPENDING ON HOW THE shows are received by buyers and critics, the future of Philippine fashion fluctuates during local Fashion Week. While many designers tend on go over the top, breaking out were factor instead of producing innovative but wearable clothes, there are those who do deserve credit for trying to change the landscape of Filipino fashion.

Three gems include Rajo Laurel and Ivar Aseron, who were invited to showcase their collections at the Bali Fashion Week held last Nov. 22-25 at Discovery Kartika Plaza Hotel in Kuta Beach. Laurel and Aseron, the first Filipino designers ever to participate in the event's seven-year history, were featured prominently in the shows.

"Rajo and Ivar were highly recommended by people who were familiar with Philippine fashion," said Ida Marchiani, an Indonesian designer and chair of Bali Fashion Week. "We have had many international design- ers showcase their collections in the past, and we're honored to have the Philippines' best for this year's edition."

The theme for the 2007 Bali Fashion Week was "Fashion Meets Art." This was something that the organizers strove to highlight in every aspect of the event (although it was often disorienting, as traditional musical presentations were alternated with models walking down the runway).

"We want to blend tourism, trade and investment," Marchiani said. "Bali has a remarkable legacy of a unique culture, and we want to maximize that aspect."

She continued, "We represent a lot of ethnic fashion. The rich culture that Indonesia is famous for is reflected in both our designs and models, and we want people to draw inspiration from that. That is why we invited our Asian neighbors and Western friends to participate in the show."

Safe and conventional

Such loyalty to the culture was apparent in the runway shows and trade fair, as many designers proudly used indigenous materials and designs for their gowns and RTW collections. However, this sometimes worked against them, as the collections featured on the first night of Fashion Week tended to be safe and conventional instead of innovative.

Traditional Balinese garb from Indonesian designers and companies such as Pascang Kreasi, Alfian Batik, ATI Textile, Ida Mandiko, Alissa Batik and Jasmil Songket ruled the runway on the first night. Although the inventions of the designers were admirable, their limited efforts for all things Indonesian resulted in alienate the foreign audience. After several of these collections, people were already chatting with each other instead of watching the shows.

The second night showed a marked improvement from the first, as it showcased a more varied selection of clothes from Indonesian and international designers. Dresses, gowns, children's clothes and quirky costumes were all on display, and a tongue-in-cheek manner models danced down the runway and for one particularly interesting collection, fire breathers and a giant robot accompanied a night club theme set.

Major highlight

One of the major highlights of the second night, however, was Aseron's collection. Inspired by chiaroscuro (the interplay of light and shadow), the collection featured browns and greens in shades of black, white and gray.

The clothes once again displayed Aseron's ability to produce tailored clothes without compromising femininity. Its draped and fashion accessories received praise for his clean lines and well-structured forms, calling his designs "revolutionary and avant garde."

In contrast to Aseron's subdued, grown-up look, Marchiani's eclectic collection of clothes, like dresses, inspired by '50s mod, featured juicy colors and wild prints paired with snakeskin, wigs, and platform shoes.

Marchiani also produced a set of flag-themed dresses, inspired by Bangkok-based designer Jeremy Scott, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Philippines, among others.

Aside from Marchiana, other international designers such as the Australia-based Lilly Jean Carlson, Singapore and Malaysian Jazer dresses covered the audience's rock-centric stage.

Indigenous materials

The undeniable star of the seven-day fashion week, however, was Rajo Laurel, whose Igorot-theme collection was featured in the finale of the final day of the event. The predominantly gold collection, which used indigenous Filipino materials such as mossy vines and rope shells, was praised by the Indonesian press as "elaborate and luxurious."

What could otherwise be considered a fault to the Bali Fashion Week (such as the strong emphasis on indigenous design and use of local models, who were admittedly not as tall and thin as those usually used in other Fashion Weeks) could also be considered their strength.

While most Asian countries place heavy emphasis on Western influence, the Bali Fashion Week organizers and designers stuck to their roots, almost as if to say, "This is who we are. Take it or leave it."

Many local designers would learn a thing or four from such nationalism, but for designers such as Aseron and Laurel, who managed to combine just the right touch of international finesse and local design, making it big in the international scene shouldn't be a problem.

E-mail the author at bianca.consunji@yahoo.com

HALLOWEEN-INSPIRED tuxedo by Maga MCC

HANDIANA'S classic midi dress

BEADS, brocade, sequins and tulle in a bridal gown by Ira Chumapumi

GRECIAN-INSPIRED sheath by Sophie Bong

CULTURAL presentations were interspersed with the fashion shows.

GOLD THRONES evening wear by Sophie Bong

OSTRICH feather-festooned dress by Auxron

PEEL capik dress by Laurel

SUMMERTIME gray gown by Aseron

RAKEHANA'S wigs and platforms make a statement

TAILORED coat paired with a feminine dress by Sulphie Bong

ROMANTIC lace bandeau by Lily Jean

OVER THE TOP chainwear by Maga MCC

Tropical treats

THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED flagship store of Inés-Rimée Boutique recently opened at the Aya Retail Space in the Rockwell Power Plant Mall, Makati.

Situated in the exclusive shopping corner in the heart of Makati, the store complements the rooms of Inés Delgado-Prieto's established Inés-Rimée boutique in Malate.

Established in 2001, the Inés-Rimée provides a high-end aesthetic and level of service that can only be found in world-renowned stores such as Joyce and Lane Crawford in Hong Kong, Browns in London, Colette in Paris, Opening Ceremony in Los Angeles and Kirna Zabete in New York.

The boutique has become a destination for the fashion-savvy consumer, offering the perfect mélange of the most coveted contemporary and emerging designer fashion brands the world over.

Transforming a 112-sq-m space into a fashion haven, Inés-Rimée has made a trademark out of sophisticated regal elements combined with classic modernism.

Clients enter a replica of earthy accents of copper-red stone and marble terrazzo floors in browns and amber tones in this new retail Mecca.

A neutral-toned line of bamboo walls and ceiling juxtapose modern stainless trims on white lacquered wood that usually separate groupings of silver-framed glass shelves from matte stainless-steel hanging racks.

Above the main display, backlit rear cupid shelf recesses delicately cascade to radiate a warm glow.

Inés-Rimée boutique maintains its exceptional service with its offering of merchandise alterations and delivery.

Understanding how beautiful and feminist the daily lives of her clients can get, Prieto is able to bring the ambiance Inés-Rimée shopping experience to the doorstep of her valued customers.

Clients are also treated to fabulous rewards for being loyal followers of Inés-Rimée. Special offers, discounts and exclusive promos are only some of the privileges Prieto offers to her treasured customers.

Sources of exclusive women's, men's and accessory fashion brands, as well as beauty products handpicked from the various fashion hotspots are available at the new store.

Every season, Inés-Rimée introduces new designs by fashion heavyweights Calypso, Shelly Jones and Elle Tahari, along with fashion darlings such as Delfin Chaves, Ella Moss and Hazel Y to name a few.

Weekly deliveries keep the store updated with the latest fashion trends from all over the globe. No need to jet away to find the most sought-after, cutting-edge fashion labels.

Inés-Rimée Boutique provides Manila's fashionable trend-setters with the must-have ready-to-wear and accessory pieces of the international style elite.

Over the past six years, Inés-Rimée has been recognized locally and internationally. South China Morning Post Magazine, hailed it as Manila's "Fashion Maven"; and Harper's Bazaar Singapore refers to the store as "the option duo of the hopelessly fashionable", while www.superfitzo.com rates the boutique as world-class, stating "you would expect such a store in Miami or the Hamptons" and does not hesitate giving it a "Super Inés-Rimée" rating.

The store has also been included in the editor's picks of the Hong Kong, Singapore and Philippine Tatler magazines.

RESORT wear in colorful hues

ITSIE-BITSIE'S beauty bar

SET THE mood with candles and spritzers

BAGS, slippers and bathing suits in different styles and colors

FYSHION BUZZ

Hot, haute, hot news!

Valentino announces new menswear designer

Valentino, the Italian fashion house whose founder will present his last collection during the autumn in Paris this month, has named Stefano Pilati as its new head of menswear.

Aged 47, Stefano Pilati has a long experience in men's clothing and has designed clothes for famous couture houses, something to draw success," the house said in a statement.

Pilati worked for Prada from 1998-2004, starting with menswear collections that helped develop the Miu Miu line for women. He joined Yves Saint Laurent in 2000 to serve as friend, where he was creative director," the statement added.

Pilati's first collection for Valentino will be presented Jan. 15, during the menswear shows in Paris, even though the men's line has until now always been shown in Milan.

Valentino, 75, announced last September that he intended to retire after showing his final haute couture collection in Rome on Jan. 22, bringing the curtain down on 45 years in the fashion business.

He has been replaced at the helm of the women's lines by Alessandra Facchinetti, a former creative director at Gucci. AFP

Victoria Beckham not so 'Posh' in '07—Blackwell

She crossed the Atlantic to hit the big time in fashion, but ex-Spice Girl Victoria "Posh" Beckham suffered her first Hollywood flop when style maven Mr. Blackwell named her the worst-dressed celebrity of 2007.

"In our history since anonymous arbiter another, 'posty Posh' can really wreck," Blackwell said in his annual list of fashion disasters among music, movie and television stars.

Beckham, who has been on a reunion tour with the Spice Girls, was not alone among pop stars who incited Blackwell's disdain.

In the No. 2 spot was British singer Amy Winehouse with rough-girl tattoos, miniskirts and hair piled high.

"Exploding beehives above, tacky gothic-diva lashes," said Blackwell.

Blackwell has issued his "Worst-Dressed" list for 48 years, and for just as long it has been widely watched and talked about among fashion followers. He began his career in the 1950s, had his own clothing line for 15 years and designed for older stars Jayne Mansfield, Peggy Lee and Joan Rivers.

He said this past year stands out as one of the "most disastrous fashion years in screen memory." Singers seemed to hold a key spot in Blackwell's mind in 2007 with pop stars Fergie and Kelly Clarkson as No. 3 and No. 5 in the worst-dressed rankings.

But amid all the fashion faux pas, Blackwell was able to find some stars who managed to look good, including Madonna, Barbra Streisand, Elizabeth Taylor and even Britain's Queen Elizabeth who, Blackwell said, "managed to update her frumpdrawer of style magic."

The 2007 top 10 worst-dressed list is as follows: 1. Beckham; 2. Winehouse; 3. Mary Kate Olsen; 4. Fergie; 5. Kelly Clarkson; 6. Britney Spears; 7. Avril Lavigne; 8. Jessica Simpson; 9. Lindsay Lohan; 10. Alison Arngrim. Reuters

VICTORIA Beckham aka Posh Spice

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ENTERTAINMENT

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Funny Fil-Am

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

Dan Gabriel finds his niche in the US comedy scene

COUCH POTATOES MAY have seen Dan Gabriel's act on Comedy Central's "Premium Blend," aired locally on Jack TV.

It wasn't your set, John Gabriel is Pinoy and proud of it. In his own words, "Half Filipino and half cold white guy."

His sunny sense of humor is evident in his MySpace account, in which strange bedfellows—like former "Free to Fight" host Bert Barker and singer Neil Diamond—occupy spots on the "Friends" list.

On CBS' "Late, Late Show," Dan joked that he had been elevated to the "Grandson Hall of Fame," having taken his 91 year-old lady friend-cum-accountant-cum-laptop of "Price is Right."

It was Dan at Grandma Lena Wild' behest," he said of John's close encounter with Barker.

In this e-mail interview, he said the highlight of his career was when the late Gabriel Garcia saw him on TV ... "making Jeopardy [spring softly]."

After winning the LA Take Out Comedy Competition, he co-created and hosted "Asia Street Comedy" on ATN TV in 2004.

According to his website, he is performing at the LA Comedy Club in Las Vegas and Hollywood Improv in LA later this month and then at the Riviera Comedy Club in Rapid in March.

"Todd" was how a reviewer on entertainment page jabbo.com described Dante Jacks Cr "Latest Debut." It added, "You don't know where the joke will go."

What led you to stand-up comedy?

In college (University California Davis), my friends encouraged me to try it because I was the funniest guy in the dorms.

What factors in your growing-up years inspired you to be a comedian?

My parents were very supportive of me and my sister Cri (Adrienne). Mom took me to Gibbs Comedy Club when I was 13.

Where do you get your jokes?

I react honestly to things that happen in my own life. That's where the best set comes from.

Do your relatives mind being part of your comedy?

They love it and are secretly hoping I'll write more jokes about them.

How does your being Filipino inform your comedy?

I do a lot of Pinoy jokes when I'm doing a Pinoy show, but it's just a part of the whole mix.

How important (influential) is Fil-Am comedian Nathaniel to you?

"We've been friends for almost 10 years now. I took my mom to a recording of his first CD. He's an inspiration to comedians everywhere, Filipino or not. His joke writing is superb.

What is it like being a Filipino-American comedian in the US?

It's hard, when I am defined that way because then people expect me to be... feminine.

I'm just Gabriel. It's tough being caught in the middle. I'm not brown enough to really represent Filipinos and not white enough to attract Filipina girls.

What's the highlight of your career so far?

That would be the first time my late uncle saw me on TV. My newborn son Mack's middle name is

FUNNY 02

CRITICS CHOICE AWARDS

The 13th Annual Critics Awards fail much better luck than the Hollywood Foreign Press Association's Golden Globes in terms of celebrity attendance. Biggie turned out for the Jan. 7 dinner event in Santa Monica, California. Headliners included George Clooney, left; Maggie Gyllenhaal and Peter Sarsgaard, above; and Brad Pitt, caught in a rare snapshot with ex-wife Jennifer Aniston, right. AFP, FILE

What could have been at the Golden Globes

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Rodney V. Nepomuceno

LOS ANGELES—PHOTO! ASSIGNMENT: Another home run at the same table with your new friends Movie and her ex-husband, Bruce Willis, so they would all cheer Bonnie Willis as she carried out her strange duties as Miss Golden Globe 2008?

And Oprah Winfrey, who organized the Best Picture-Drama nominees, "The Great Debaters," where would she have sat?

Planks of hard work planning the seating arrangements inside the International Ballroom of the Beverly Hilton for stars, nominees and VIP guests at the 65th Golden Globe Awards—Oprah, Bruce, Ashton, Oprah, Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Quentin Tarantino and company...were all for naught.

Because here is how it has the Globes choreographer dinner show widely reported at Hollywood's party of the year has been scrapped!...for latest casualty in the ongoing strike by the Writers Guild of America. Instead, a press conference announcing the winners has been set on Sunday evening, Jan. 13, as originally scheduled.

Who cares

And the show goes on as usual, who would have set where remains a tantalizing question, as it reveals the latest in Hollywood...who counts and who are on chemistry terms. Here's a rundown of the notable seating plan:

Oprah, No. 1 talk show host, got Table No. 1. She'd have enjoyed at that table with Bernard Washington, who directed and starred in "The Great Debaters," and his wife, Paulette, Bernard is in the running as Best Actor-Drama for another film, "American Gangster," which is competing against "The Debaters."

Queen Clint Eastwood would have just listened to the table chatter with master winning composer Carole Bayer Sager. Why are Clint and Carole at that table? They are both up for Best Original Song the composers the master; she wrote the lyrics) from Julie Gerard's movie, "Grace is Gone," directed by Harvey's studio. Clint is also nominated for Best Original Score for the same film.

Prime table

If you ask us, the real prime table is No. 4, located front and center in the ballroom. The honor goes to the folks behind Universal Pictures' "Charlie Wilson's War," which got five nods, including Best Picture-Drama, Best Actor nominee, and his wife, Kim Wilson; Julia Roberts, Best Supporting Actress contender; Philip Seymour Hoffman, Best Supporting Actor front-runner; director Mike Nichols and his wife, TV journalist Diane Sawyer; Universal's top honchos Ron Meyer and his wife, Kelly Alan Ladd; and NBC president Jeff Zucker and his wife, Caryn.

Also a coveted table, location-wise, is No. 5. It was reserved for Steven Spielberg and his pard Anjelica Huston, there was no less than Martin Scorsese, who would have presented one of the night's top plums, the Cecil B. DeMille Award, to Steven.

George Clooney would have occasional banter written Sarah Larson or whatever his name (who cares?) was, is table No. 3. The nominated star would have teamed with Mom (Nancy Jr.—win or lose—with Julian nominee from "Michael Clayton" Tilda Swinton and Tom Wilkinson, and Tony Gilroy, whose acclaimed directorial debut was rewarded with a Best Picture-Drama nod.

Many eyes would have stayed glued to No. 9, where Hollywood's reigning A-list couple, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, was to be seated. Especially if Angelina, up for Best Actress-Drama ("A Mighty Heart"), revealed new Julie Christie ("Away From Her"), buzzed about as her stiffest competition.

Two key tokens of "Then Will Be Blood" would have sat there, too: Best Actor-Drama front-runner Daniel Day-Lewis, his wife, director-actress Rebecca Miller, director Paul Thomas Anderson and pastor Maya Rudolph of "Saturday Night Live."

Disparate group

Broker Eddie Mublin, up for two awards, Best Original Score (with Michael Brook and Kaki King) and Best Song for his work on the Sean Penn-directed "Into the Wild," and his girlfriend, model Jill McCormick are in the mix. What links this seemingly disparate group? That Penn were released by Paramount Vantage, whose top exec, Adam Leibson, completed the list at the table.

Table No. 6 would have also been in the running for most fascinating, with the bloody five: Julia from "Runaway Bride," Steve Carell's ex-fiancé ("Bruce"), would have kept his appearance to minimum. Jim Rassett, Julia Huber, who grew birth to their baby girl last October, Johnny Depp, who might win the same honor that Stella won last time he was in the ballroom, and his wife, French singer-actress Vanessa Paradis; top film executive Richard Zanuck, Alan Horn and Stacey Snider.

The cast and key talents behind "Atonement," the movie with the most nominations (seven), were assigned

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Fil-Am . . .

Pasuquin!
Gobide, too . . . other myside.

What's your most unforgettable gig or project?

It was the Comedy Central Live Tour with my heroes Dave Attell, Lewis Black and the late Mitch Hedberg.

How did you feel about the anti-Pinoy joke on "Desperate Housewives"?

I remember thinking, Ted Mitchell, because our mails are Baino Hospital any time soon.

Do you have plans of performing in the Philippines?

Maybe. I'll go there and open for Sen. Ito Lim.

What are you busy with now?

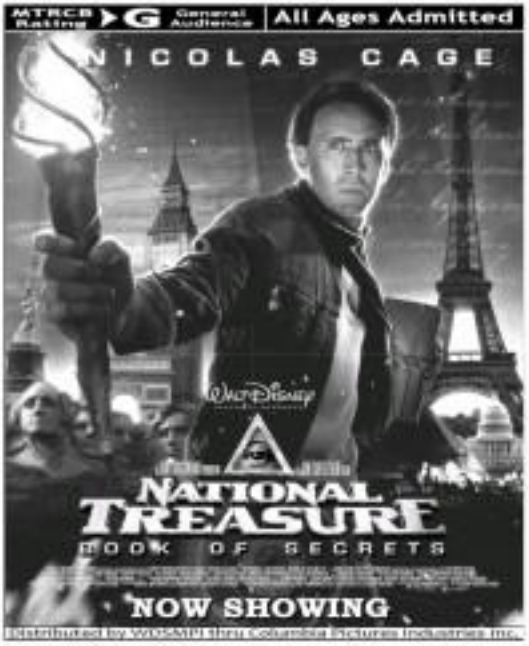
Trading the stocks, and editing my son Matt.

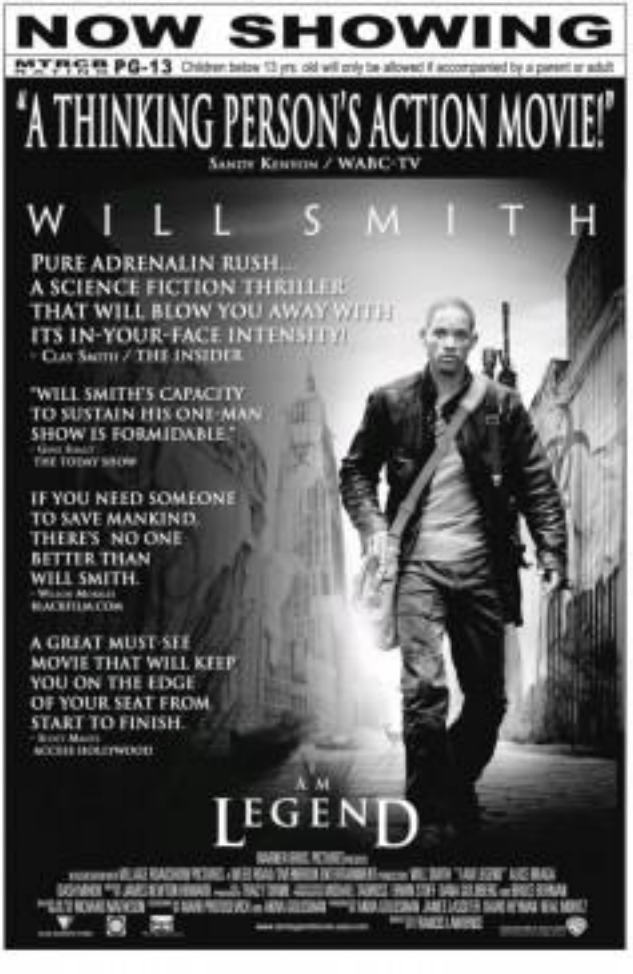
Since you are good-looking, is it harder or easier for you to get laughs?

Hmmm. The Asian ear comes on weird looking.

How Filipino are you? How familiar are you with Pinoy traits and traditions?

Not as much as I should be, but enough to appreciate my life humorously.





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THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL FIGHTING FORCES ARE NO MATCH AGAINST THE LEGENDARY BEASTS OF WAR
D-WAR
DOOMSDAY WAR HAS BEGUN!

What could have been . . .

From page E3

table No. 2. They are **Greta Gaigisley** and her boyfriend, "Pride & Prejudice" co-star **Rupert Grint**; **James Mcavoy** and his wife, actress **Ann-Marie Duff**; director **Joe Wright** and his fiancée, **Rosamund Pike**, Keira's sister in "Pride"; young actress **Saoirse** (pronounced "Sir-shah") Ronan.

Sharing table No. 7 would have been top Best Actress contenders Julie Christie and **Marion Cotillard**, who is in the other race, Best Actress Comedy or Musical, for her knockout portrayal of French singer **Edith Piaf** from age 17 to her death at 47. (Most of those scenes...reduce a sexpatriate.)

At No. 8 are the stars who played mother and daughter in "Hairspray," **John Travolta** (who's scrubbed her untold hit with actress **Kirstie Alley**) and **Nikki Blonsky**.

Grammy-truly folk legend **Barbra Gm**, aka **John C. Reilly**, is at No. 10 with director **Julie Taymor**, whose film, "across the Universe," a film ripp out to 33 Beatles songs, got a nod for Best Film (cutside of Musical.

Asia is represented at No. 11 with Ang Lee, nominated for Best Foreign Language Film for "Lust, Caution," long would have been in the company: "Atonement's" Saoirse Ruthgrton, Viggo Mortensen, who figured in 2007's most memorable fight scene for the compelling "Eastern Promises," "no thanks in the multi-nominated Sally-dressed thingy! And his director David Cronenberg.

Double sorrow

Cate Blanchett wouldn't say "I'm not there," because she's a double nominee. The pregnant beauty star has two shots at a Globe: She's in the race for Best Actress Drama and Best Supporting actress for "Elizabeth: The Golden Age" and "I'm Not There," respectively. Director **Mickey Sevin**, who is gunning for Best Director Drama with his "Bourne to Gangster" would have been at No. 12 with Cate.

Sweet? **Ellen Page**, Marion's youngest rival for Best Actress Comedy or Musical, would have wanted for the seating of the envelope at No. 14. The young actress, brilliant in a wrong or dinking with an unplanned pregnancy, would have had co-star **Allison Janney** saved by nonpredictable—or somewhat—low, chronicling in whose name it announced.

Rounding up the folks who are on the pot in the ballroom are the "No Country for Old Men" delegation: **Javier Bardem** who might stand up to get his Best Supporting actor trophy (although his chair have to smack chance—**Philip; Julia, Tom** and Casey Affleck; director Joel Coben, who have three chances to walk up the stage with their nods for Best Picture-Drama, Best Director and Best Screenplay; **Josh Brolin**, who was exceptional as the lead but was not nominated, and his wife, actress **Diane Lane**.

On the next tier are tables hosting the happy family (Mom, Adrien and Bruce) | FOX Best Actress - Drama contender **Julie Pecker** ("The Barer Heart"), her co-star **Berard Hamael** and Casey ("The Assassination of Jesse James"). (104); "I'm Endeavor" hopefuls **Amy Adams**, also Monkey and Stephen Schwartz and "Enchantedly" **Brad Bird** (108).

No Quentin in kacong

He may have lost an opportunity to see **Quentin Tarantino** mess his favorite Texan's kissing again at a major Hollywood event. He would have proably seen the Philippines' ca-

round shirt at No. 102 while seated with last year's Golden Globe first actor-Drama winner, **Forest Whitaker**.

Spread around at the surrounding tables are other nominees, mostly from the TV categories and other guests, including: Grey's Anatomy **Patrick Dempsey**, **Ellen Pompeo**, **Katherine Heigl**, **Sally Field**, **Anneliese Stevens**, **Jessica Ob**, **Debra Messing**, **Kyra Sedgwick**, **Holly Hunter**, **Bill Paxton**, **Steve Carell**, **Michael C. Hall**, **Kenny Mens**, **Kevin Dillon**, **Adrian Grenier**, **Amy Poeh**, **Alec Baldwin**, **Tina Fey**, **Lee Pace**, **Matthew Gerenting** and many more.

Guests asked cause while we were pulling our collective hair in trying to sort all these stars, nominees and their guests and coming up with some sign of possible trend this afternoon, the luncheon of a Hollywood talk called to say that she wanted to attend the Globes event. We had looks into laughter. There we were, finding seats for all these stars, and this 90-plus matter and her husband who made a fabulously elaborate personality claim but may want other!

E-mail the columnist at [redacted] or [redacted] and read his blog, "The Agony Is Just Beginning" at [redacted]

HELLO, NEW YEAR!

THE SANTIAGOS WELCOMED 2008 WITH SPARKLERS IN THEIR CITY HOME (ABOVE). "We usually go to Subic...but this Claudine's sister from Boston, asked the holidays rich as do our same house for New Year's Eve," says Raymund. Three-year-old daughter Gideon credit: Raymund and Claudine, left) got all excited when dad went up the roof to fix the lights. "She was scared I'd fall. She kept saying 'Wawa! Come down dad!'" Five-month-old Matthew Rod (not shown) can now sit/ unaided. In fact, his parents report, "He's so mobile," and he's apparently fond of wearing shades, like uncle Randy. "Claudine took him to the mall," Raymund recalls. "When he tried a pair of glasses on, he liked it so much that Claudine ended up buying two pairs!" (Report: Inn Diego Jr.

LAWYER GABY CONCEPCION

OUR 8-YEAR-OLD SON AL-ready loves running our pets. I used to have a Shih Tzu whom he named Dory because my mom's Shih Tzu was called Mama. Dory and Nemo were partners also. When my husband (Father Lowster) and I broke up (but Danny Concepcion) I gave me a toy poodle for Mother's Day. Alfonso christened it Dodo because I collect dragon figures. When a friend gave us a white toy poodle, we remembered a Dungeonology book and found the name Pooh. Bears is renowned but affectionate ... Poor guy, giddy with excitement whenever I arrive home.

(Report: Inn Diego Jr.

BOOKS

RAYMOND GUTIERREZ

I'M LEARNING A LOT from "The 48 Laws of Power," by Robert Greene. It opened my mind to different viewpoints—especially about handling situations (in fact of "Market Control" and "Living It Up"). It has lots of proof to support its theories. (Report: Inn Diego Jr.

A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA

A. LIPAS

PUSH DADDY

AH MO DAL... ELLO? ELLO? ELLO?

Eavesdropping on the stars

JOHN Travolta

PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA—BEFORE Spears' hospitalization and the continuing Hollywood writers strike that kept the Golden Globes ceremony off the air dominated red carpet chatter at the 2008 Palm Springs International Film Festival gala.

As honorees made their way through the media gauntlet Saturday at the year's first major entertainment award event, many unlikely chirpy interviews convoked into talk about the aborted Globes show.

"It's always and when a program fluid to be canceled," John Travolta, who was honored with an Ensemble Performance Award, told AP Television News. "If it doesn't happen, we'll postpone it and do it another time."

Many Globe nominees were in Palm Springs collecting souvenirs from the film festival, including Daniel Day-Lewis (Desert Palm Achievement Award), Glen Pepa (Chairman's Vanguard Award) and Travolta's "Hairspray" co-star Nikki Blonsky (Rising Star Award).

"I think everyone involved in a project should share the benefit of it," said French actress Marion Cotillard, who received Palm Springs' Breakthrough Performance Award and is a Globe nominee for her performance in "La Vie en Rose."

The fun of unbridled pop star Britney Spears was the other red hot topic on the Palm Springs red carpet.

Weird things

"I think that that business just does weird things to people," said Amanda Bynes of "Hairspray." "They get swapped up to the hoopla and the hair and the makeup, the shopping, the paparazzi and the trying to be famous. That's not what it's about."

Other Palm Springs honorees in attendance included Jessa Penn (Director of the Year), Hallie Berry (Desert Palm Achievement Award) and "Into the Wild" actor Emile Hirsch (Rising Star Award). The Palm Springs fest runs until Jan. 14. AP

HALLE Berry

UPDATE: PG. 12

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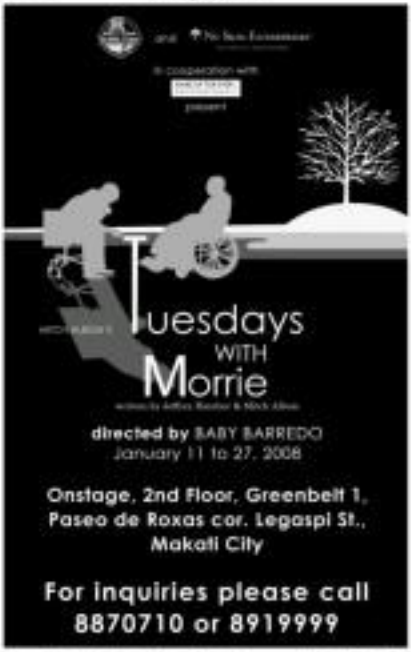

directed by BABY BARREDO
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For inquiries please call
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AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 DESPERADOS	2 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	3 I AM LEGEND	4 BAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
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	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	5 BAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	6 I AM LEGEND	7 DESPERADOS
GREENBELT 1	1 I AM LEGEND		2 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	
GREENBELT 3	1 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS		2 I AM LEGEND	
	3 DESPERADOS	4 BEE MOVIE	5 SYDNEY WHITE	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 I AM LEGEND		2 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	
	3 BEE MOVIE	4 BAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	5 DESPERADOS	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1	2 I AM LEGEND	3 BEE MOVIE	4 BAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
MARKET! MARKET!	1 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS		2 BEE MOVIE	
	3 SYDNEY WHITE	4 I AM LEGEND	5 BAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	
TRINOMA	1 BAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 DESPERADOS	3 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	4 BEE MOVIE
	5 SYDNEY WHITE	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	7? I AM LEGEND	

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

glorietta — WELCOME 2008 SALE! January 11 to February 3

GREENBELT — WELCOME 2008 SALE! January 11 to February 3

ALABANG TOWN CENTER — WELCOME 2008 SALE! January 11 to February 3

AYALA CENTER CEBU — Sto. Niño Symbol January 11 to 20; Exhibit Area 2

MARKET! MARKET! — WELCOME 2008 SALE! January 11 to February 3

Circa — Repertory Philippines presents TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE January 11 to 27, 2007 For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710 or visit www.repertory.philippines.com

Ayala MUSEUM — ANTON: THE MUSICAL by Jomike Tejido Interactive Play January 19, 2008, Ayala Museum Multi-Purpose Hall For more info, pls. call 757-1757 or 2 loc. 14 or email museum_inquiries@ayalamuseum.org

Tri Noma — Resto-Rhythmo featuring Gardenia Restaurant January 8, 7 pm - Level 1 - Plaza WELCOME 2008 SALE! January 11 to February 3

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Showing on January 16, 2008 at all Ayala Malls Cinemas
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Live at the Ayala Malls!
Schedule of Mall Shows:
Trinoma (Level 1) & 2)
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Market! Market! (Level 3)
(2:30pm, 3:30pm & 4:30pm)
Alabang Town Center (Level 2)
(2:30pm, 3:30pm & 4:30pm)

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glorietta GREENBELT ALABANG TOWN CENTER AYALA CENTER CEBU Tri Noma

ROBERT'S snack collection includes this pizza that is modeled from his own face.

THE STUDY area is equipped with a personal computer and printer.

House of souvenirs

THE OLD dining set is made from tanglin wood.

THIS CABINET is one of the first pieces that they bought as a couple.

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Rony Humildes

SINGING COUPLE ROBERT Swint and Inay Alvarez have boxes of never-been-used pieces of furniture and home accessories stored in the attic of their Quezon City townhouse.

"We bought them to prepare ahead for our new house," Robert told Living Stars during a recent visit. "But when this new house would come, we don't know yet," added the wife Inay.

For now, the couple and their three kids are still very comfortable in the 300 sq. m., three-story home. "When we bought this in 1998, the main consideration was that it was near the schools where my daughter and youngest son were studying," explained Inay.

The house recently underwent renovation—it now has a balcony and a bigger area. The family center on the ground floor is now a dining and recreation area.

Inay's kitchen, although small, is very efficient. Here, she has cooked for 40 guests. "Everything is within reach," she said. "My only desire is for a bigger chopping area."

The living room showcases the grand piano that Robert inherited from his parents, and a Chinese armoire "where we now store our CD collections."

Robert and Inay have also accumulated knick-knacks from the numerous places they have gone to—an antique industrial fan from London, hanging art pieces from Bali, teak sculptures from Dubai and figurines from Indonesia.

SHOPPING around in the library, which showcases their trophies.

ME CRAZY, his art piece, which he made, "The Wierdness of my Mind."

MODULAR kitchen has everything Inay needs to cook for as many as 40 people.

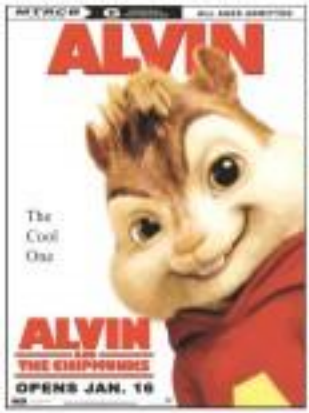
THE CHINESE armoire in the living area contains the couple's CD collection and some memorabilia.

Masks and a garden

Robert's collection of masks—brought home from travels in Malaysia, Korea and Germany—could be seen all over the house, along with art pieces by Malang, Jerusalem's Senior Torre and his own.

On the ground floor of the rectangular structure is an indoor water feature which, Inay said, she got from the Manila Dowling Bank co/pension City.

"This use used to be an indoor garden, but every time we put a plant here, it dies."



THE OLD laundry corner has been transformed into a multipurpose area where the Swints "eat and/or just chill out."

THE LANTERN is from the producer of a chair that Robert inherited.

CORNER table holds some precious memories, too.

THE WATER feature is one highlight of the rectangular 300-sq. m. house. "Maintenance is quite easy," says Inay.